JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

PEASANT AND PAINTER

JAMES R. OSGOOD & CO.

Herbert Browne,

from

Louis & Tom

Christmas 1880.

THE SOWER.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

PEASANT AND PAINTER

Translated by Helena de Kay from the French of

ALFRED SENSIER

BOSTON:
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1881

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ALFRED SENSIER.

ALFRED SENSIER, whose posthumous book is here published, was a man who interested himself in historical things, who loved, almost with passion, pictures, drawings, and engravings, and who defended with the most indefatigable devotion some of the greatest artists of this century. He fought for them and by their side. In future years the name of Sensier will be always associated with the names of Théodore Rousseau, Diaz, and Millet.

Born in Paris on the 25th of December, 1815, the son of a lawyer who delighted in books, Alfred Sensier heard, from childhood, the gossip of "Vignette editions" as well as the severer discussions of the law. Although he spent some of his youthful years in a lawyer's office, Sensier was always fond of pictures. While pursuing his law course, he watched with a passionate attention the great battles of modern art and its triumphs.

When we first knew Alfred Sensier, a little while after the proclamation of the second Republic, he had just entered the Louvre with Jeanron. From the 1st of April, 1848, to the end of 1850, he fulfilled the functions of *Chef de Bureau des Musées*. It was especially at this time that he was curious about collecting authentic documents on the subject of the Revolution and its leaders. He had carefully studied the history of that time, and it was interesting to

hear him talk of the great politicians of the Constituent Assembly and of the National Convention. All who are interested in this period know the value of his collection, his ingenious discoveries, and the memories bequeathed to him by his family.

Leaving the administration of the museums, he went into the office of the Minister of the Interior, remaining there until June 1st, 1873, at which time he was retired. His health, which had for some time been failing, did not permit him to make entire use of the liberty he had regained. Many of his projects remained nothing but dreams. Alfred Sensier died on the 7th of January, 1877, in his modest apartment in the Rue Chaptal, of which he had made a little museum.

In his youth he found himself one of a group of artists at war with the authorities, and he formed strong friendships with those especially who were destined to introduce into modern landscape the poetry of a new ideal. Sensier, who had never liked academies, was from the outset a member of the free academy of Barbizon. He became intimate with Théodore Rousseau in 1846 — that is, at the time when the eminent landscape-painter was an outlaw, a heretic, whose suspicious works would, in the eyes of the jury, dishonor the *Salon* of the Louvre. Sensier became, from that moment, a sharer in all the fortunes of war which the brave artist had to endure, and afterward his testamentary executor and historian.

Sensier knew and loved the glorious phalanx of painters who are still the honor of modern landscape. He knew Jules Dupré, Barye, Troyon, and Diaz. He was a most constant friend to Jean-François Millet, that strong and delicate master whom victory was so slow to crown. These artists were all victims of the official jury. Sensier suffered from the insult to his friends. Age did not calm his warlike propensities. We may say to-day that Sensier was more of a fighter than a critic.

Nevertheless he doubted of his capacity, and hesitated a long time before becoming a man of letters. In 1858 he published, under a pseudonym, an interesting notice of Olivier de Serres—a little work which book-lovers should preserve, not only on account of the documents which it contains, but also because it has as frontispiece one of the rare lithographs by Millet.

Sensier then made an excursion into the eighteenth century. He translated and annotated the journal of Rosalba Carriera (1865). He wrote in the "Epoque," under the pseudonym of Jean Ravenel, several articles on the Exhibitions and on modern painting, and as he was always a warrior carrrying a flag, he constantly, in his criticisms, said a good word for the group of sympathetic painters of the school of Barbizon, of whom he was glad to be the mouth-piece. Finally, he worked with great energy on the "*Revue internationale de l'art et de la curiosité*," which he had founded in 1869, in company with Ernest Feydeau,—a periodical whose publication was brought to an end by the events of 1870.

It was in this review that Sensier printed his most important work, the "*Souvenirs sur Théodore Rousseau.*" These articles, full of personal revelations of the artist and the man, were gathered into a volume in 1872, and form the most detailed biography of the great landscape-painter. The following year he published his "*Etude sur George Michel*"—a difficult work, for he who has been called the "Ruysdael of Montmartre" had already become an almost legendary personage; and it was not without great pains that the historian managed to clear up the obscure points of his mysterious life.

After having finished this task, Sensier, already ill and old before his time, wished to produce a companion to his "Souvenirs of Rousseau," and undertook a book which he alone was competent to write —a biography of Jean-François Millet. He had the letters of his comrade at hand, he was acquainted with interesting particulars as

to his origin, his work, and his struggles, which were unknown to the public. The writer died without being able to finish his work.

The day of Sensier's funeral, it was decided among his family and friends that his manuscript, arranged and completed, should take the form of a volume. The manuscript was given to us in a not very good condition. Sensier told Millet's life up to 1864, but for the following ten years had only put together documents and notes, with here and there, and only for a few episodes, a little editorial work; and even in the advanced parts were many imperfect pages, which the writer, interrupted by illness, had left for quieter days — days which never came. We have performed our work without changing the thought of the chief editor, but allowing ourselves to correct some historical mistakes. We have used all the author's notes, and we can offer complete, if not perfect, the manuscript which Sensier cared more for than for anything he had written, because it commemorated his dearest friend.

Alfred Sensier has drawn his own portrait in a few lines, which serve as preface to his "*Souvenirs sur Théodore Rousseau.*" He confesses that he is no professional critic, that he can not analyze, or *half* admire, and that when he is once won, he has the "faith of a coal-heaver." This, in fact, is his fault, — it is also his best quality. Along with his illustrious friends he was mixed up in academic disputes where he had to speak loud to be heard at all, persuaded, like them, that victory is the price of conviction and persistence.

PAUL MANTZ.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE great English painter, John Constable, the renewer of modern landscape, died in 1837. A friend, himself an artist, the admirer of his talent and the companion of his entire life, undertook to bring together his correspondence, writings, and conversations, and to publish them, with annotations, under the title, "Memoirs of John Constable, R. A." Charles Leslie, in a book written with fraternal affection, tells the sufferings, the doubts, and the joys of the miller who became a landscape-painter.

We have neither the talent nor the knowledge of Charles Leslie, a learned and clever man, but we are scarcely less rich than he—our hands are full of letters and notes, and our mind is full of memories. For more than thirty years we lived Millet's life, receiving his confidences and complaints, and knowing his innermost thoughts. We loved him; he knew our affection for him, and withheld no confidences from us.

Millet had a suffering and melancholy nature, but he was first of all a man of strong convictions. Faithful and proud in his religion and his art, to these he sacrificed pleasure, repose, and even his life, which was shortened by his struggles.

We therefore publish a life of Millet from his own words and testimony. There is nothing to hide. Everything is healthy, pure, and instructive.

We have copied the greater part of the documents from Millet's own handwriting, accompanied by his conversations, our own explanations, and our own personal reflections. We have not judged our friend, but we have attempted to defend him from attacks, and to show him as he seemed to us during the thirty years of our friendship. Even if it is possible to have more than one opinion of his talent, his life must be reckoned that of a sage, a courageous worker, a loving father, and a devoted comrade. His biography is so diversified, so different from our ordinary existence, that if we had chosen to change the names the book might have passed for a romance,—the situations are so moving, the resignation is so incredible, and the action so varied. And yet the recital we have to make is but a true and faithful picture. The reader will soon recognize this fact. We have invented nothing, imagined nothing.

Millet is to our minds a great figure in art, a product of a fertile field,—a new man, with healthy ideas, a clear brain, a sure and powerful hand. He celebrated his own daily life, his race, his work as a peasant. He gave our school a fructifying thought; others than ourselves may develop more clearly its importance.

People wished to consider him a revolutionary or a pedant. It is time such mistakes should cease. Millet is not the only one in France who has spoken words of power concerning the unfortunate man destined to win his bread by the sweat of his brow. La Bruyère was not persecuted for having made a sublime and fierce portraiture of human misery. Montaigne and La Fontaine exhibited the man of the fields, drawn from nature, with the indelible marks of his origin and suffering. In our own day a great thinker, Châteaubriand, has painted, with all the sadness and poetry of his style, the poor laborer of our country: "If, returning to the château, I met a laborer at the edge of a field, I stopped to look at this man, born amid the grain where he will be reaped, and turning up with his plow, as it

were, the ground of his tomb; mixing his burning sweat with the icy rain of autumn. The furrow he had just turned was a monument destined to outlive him. I have seen the pyramids of Egypt and the forgotten furrows under our heather: both alike bear witness to the works of man and the shortness of his days."

Like these masters, Millet looked for beauty in the expression, and expression in the typical figure of the workman in the fields. He knew as well as any one where to find the beauty of Apollo, the regularity, delicacy, and distinction of civilized races. He was not ignorant of rules of selection; he had read the grammar of plastic art. He had seen, as well as others, the "handsome fellow" of his own village and the pretty girls of the country, but he sought to characterize, with the whole force of his mind and all the memories of his heart, the painful and inexplicable condition of the human creature upon earth.

For Millet, the man of the soil represents the whole human family; the laborer gave him the clearest type of our toil and our suffering. The peasant is to him a living being who formulates, more strongly and clearly than any other man, the image, the symbolical figure of humanity. Millet, however, is neither a discouraged nor a sad man. He is a laborer who loves his field—plows, sows, and reaps it. His field is art. His inspiration is life, is nature—which he loved with all his strength. Let none seek to find in him anything but a pious and compassionate soul, who speaks from his heart. And if, before a painting or a drawing by Millet, we are shocked by the roughness of his hand, the unusualness of his subject, the unexpectedness of his composition, let time do its work, and, like the artist, let us go and look at the plains, the forest, and the sky; let us forget for a moment our fashions and traditions, and we will feel the same strengthening breath that animated Millet. Seeing the rustic family occupied in the works of the fields with

anxious mind, resigned attitude, and slow and painful gesture, we will come back to Millet, and he that understands him will say: Here is a painter who has given a place to the humblest; a poet who has raised to honor those whom the world ignores, and a good man whose work encourages and consoles.

NOTE BY THE AMERICAN PUBLISHERS.

The present work,—being an abridged translation, from advance sheets, of "La Vie et L'Oeuvre de J.-F. Millet, par Alfred Sensier: Manuscrit Publié par Paul Mantz:" Paris, A. Quantin, 1881,—is reprinted from SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY, with additional letter-press and illustrations.

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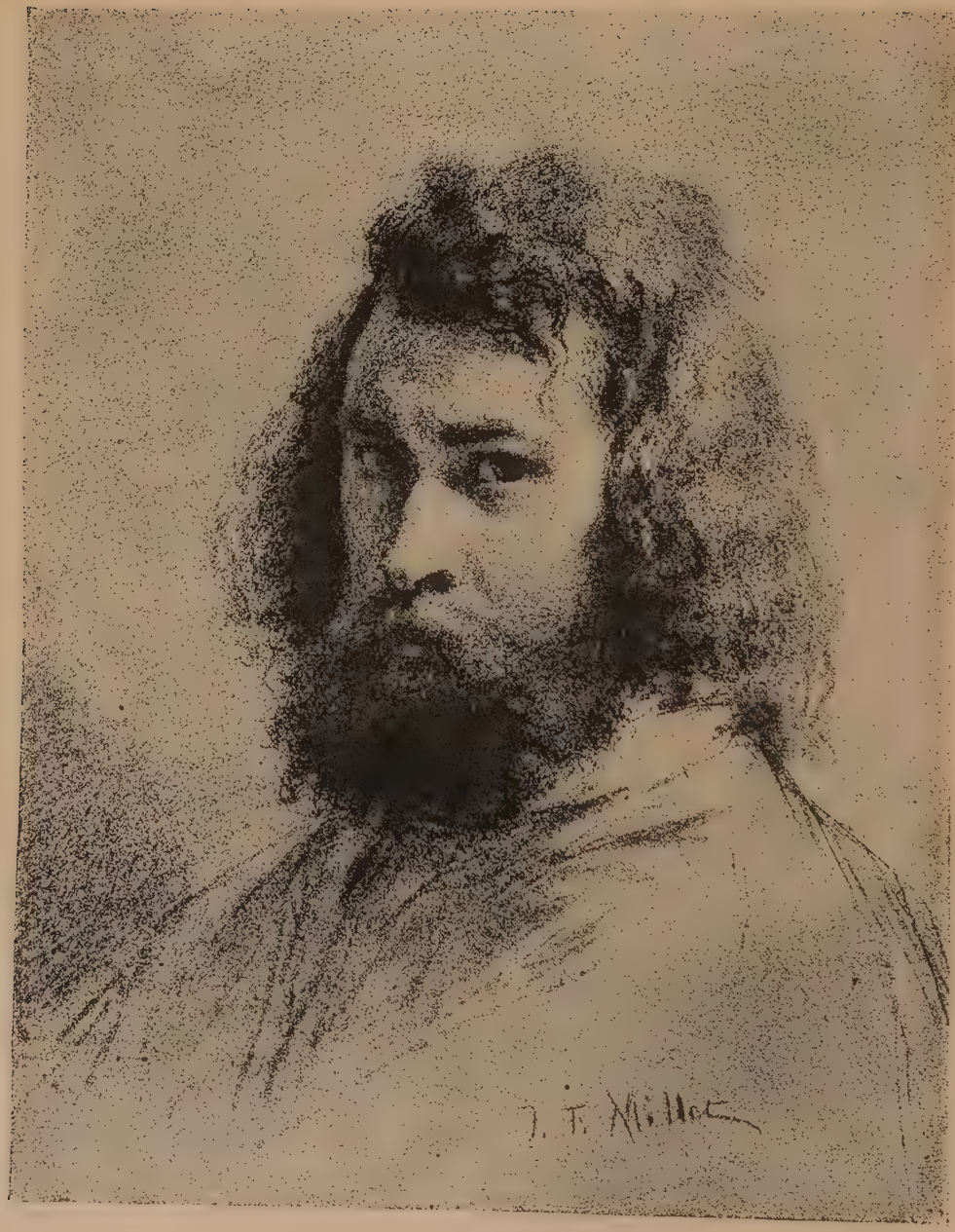


PORTRAIT OF MILLET (1846 7).

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET,

PEASANT AND PAINTER.

I.

Millet's Family and Birth—Recollections of his Childhood in Normandy.

THE harbor of Cherbourg is bounded on the east by Point Fermanville, and on the west by Cape de la Hague. Seen from the sea, the country of La Hague looks desolate and forbidding. High granite cliffs surround it on all sides. Masses of black rock, thrown up in the volcanic age, stand out from the water in all sorts of strange and jagged shapes. The shores, covered with sharp points and needles which might be iron or steel, give it the look of an uninhabitable land. But when you reach the heights, the aspect changes and becomes bright; plowed fields, pastures of sheep and cows, woods and houses, show that the country is fertile and kindly. In the fold of a little valley, open toward the sea, lies the hamlet of Gruchy, belonging to the parish and commune of Gréville.

Forty years ago a family of laborers lived there, who, from father to son, tilled their land. This family, named Millet, consisted of a

grandmother, a widow, her son and his wife, eight children, and one or two servants. The grandfather, Nicolas Millet, had been dead some fifteen years. The grandmother had brought up all the children with the care which the babies of Normandy enjoy,—according to the custom of the country, the grandmother has charge of their first years, the mother being too busy with the work of the fields and the stables.

Louise Jumelin, widow of Nicolas Millet, the grandmother, came from Saint-Germain-le-Gaillard, some leagues from Gréville; her family, of the old race of the country, had strong heads and warm hearts. One brother belonged to a religious order. Another, a clever chemist, was a man of some note; a third, though a miller in the Hochet valley, spent his leisure reading Pascal, Nicole, the writers of Port Royal, and philosophers like Montaigne and Charron. He was not a reasoner, but a strong-headed fellow, full of good sense and uprightness. An old sister named Bonne, whom they called Bonnotte, cared for the children with untiring devotion. Bonnotte was one of Millet's dearest remembrances; a thoroughly faithful creature, thinking of everything and everybody but herself. Another brother Jumelin, a great walker, went to Paris on foot, without rest, in two days and two nights. He had knocked about the world a good deal. At Guadaloupe he became overseer on a plantation, and came back with some money to the hamlet of Pieux, where he worked a little farm.

The grandmother was like her family, and she rivaled her relations both in wisdom and fervor. She was a worthy peasant-woman, talking patois and wearing the dress and cap of La Hague. Humility

was one of her virtues. All her strength was concentrated in the love of God, doing her duty, and the love of her family. Full of religious fire, harsh toward herself, gentle and charitable to others, she passed her days in good deeds, having always before her the example of the saints. Her conscientious scruples went so far that at the least doubt she asked counsel of the curé of her village; and she was so rigid in her duties as grandmother that she never allowed herself to inflict the slightest punishment upon her grandchildren in a moment of impatience, but waited until the next day, in order to explain to them in cool blood the importance of the fault and the justice of the punishment. Her charity was boundless. She had the old traditions of hospitality and respect for the poor. If a peddler passed, he did not need to ask for lodging; he knew the door of the Millet house was always open. The beggars came there as if to a home. The grandmother, with a curtsy, made them draw near the fire, gave them food and lodging, talked of the affairs of the neighborhood, and, when they left, filled their wallets.

Her son, Jean-Louis-Nicolas Millet, was a simple and gentle soul, pure in his life and highly respected by his neighbors. If the village jokes were rather coarse, and Jean-Louis came near enough to hear, they said: "Hush! here's Millet." He had a contemplative mind and a musical temperament, highly developed. A singer in the parish church, he directed with intelligence the country choristers to whom the people came to listen for miles around. At that time the congregation responded to the chanting of the priest and the choir. Jean-Louis Millet picked out the best voices and taught them. Millet had some chants which his

father had written down, and which looked like the work of a scribe of the fourteenth century.

Sunday, after mass, Jean-Louis liked to receive his relations and friends, and there, at home, in the midst of his family, he celebrated the Lord's day like a patriarch, offering them the bountiful and simple meal of a peasant who wishes to honor his guests. This worthy man doubtless ignored the germs of art which existed in himself. He was absorbed by work until the hour of his death; but his nature was more refined than his circumstances. He died without knowing his own worth and gifts. A confused instinct, however, sometimes showed itself. Taking a bit of grass, he would say to his son François: "See how fine! Look at that tree—how large and beautiful! It is as beautiful as a flower!" From his window, looking at a depression in the hill-side: "See!" he would say; "that house half-buried by the field is good; it seems to me that it ought to be drawn that way." Sometimes with a little clay he tried to model, or with a knife he would cut in the wood an animal or a plant. Tall, slender, his head covered with long black curls, gentle eyes and beautiful hands—such was the father of Jean-François Millet.

His mother, Aimée-Henriette-Adélaïde Henry, born at Sainte-Croix-Hague, belonged to a race of rich farmers who at one time were called gentlemen. They were called the Henry du Perrons. She was entirely engrossed in her household, her children, and her work. Pious, but not given to the spiritual exaltation of the Jumelin family, she lived for her work and in obedience to her husband. The family of Henry du Perron was composed of

several children, who all married and lived in Sainte-Croix. Millet remembered his mother saying that the home of her parents was quite an important place, with its big buildings of granite, and its fine court-yard shaded by old trees, under which the ox-carts and plow stood around a water-trough. The house was said to have been a noble house a century before, which, in time of trouble, had fallen into the hands of peasants. Perhaps the Henry du Perrons were themselves the descendants of the fallen masters.

Another relation whom Millet always spoke of with feeling was his great-uncle, Charles Millet, priest of the diocese of Avranche. Before the Revolution he had taken orders and read mass, but when the law allowed him to return to civil life, the Abbé Millet came back to his village. He wished to remain faithful to his vows, and, in spite of the danger, he became a laborer in *sabots* and *soutane*, and would never lay aside his priestly garments. He might be seen reading his breviary on the high fields overlooking the sea, following the plow, or moving blocks of stone to wall in the family acres. He taught the older children of the family to read. During the Revolution his liberty and even his life had been threatened because he would not take the oath to the Constitution, which he believed to be hostile to the Pope.

This excellent and faithful man passed his days in field-work and contemplation, and gave to his nephews the pattern of a spotless life. If he had a furrow to plow or a garden to hoe, he tucked his priest's coat into his belt, put his missal in his pocket, and went cheerfully to work. He saw that his nephew needed help;

for, if the life at Gruchy was at all comfortable, it was at the price of untiring exertion. The steep fields made the work heavy, and life on land and sea required very hard and often very dangerous labor.

For the people of the neighborhood, the sea was an inheritance. Gruchy had no fishermen, but they got from the beach a manure, which the horses and mules had to carry up the steep, narrow paths to the fields above. They were always watching the wrecks, to seize them before they were carried out again; and after great storms whole banks of sea-weed came up on the waves. Then the entire village, armed with long rakes, rushed to the sea-shore to reap the sea-weed —a rich but dangerous harvest. Some of the men of Gruchy were hired by smugglers, and spent long nights in avoiding the coast-guards. The Millets never indulged in this suspicious industry. "We never ate that bread," said Millet; "my grandmother would have been too unhappy about it."

MILLET, the painter of peasants, was born October 4th, 1814, in the village of Gruchy, commune of Gréville, canton of Baumont (Manche). He was the second child of Jean-Louis-Nicolas Millet, farmer, and his legal wife, Aimée-Henriette-Adélaïde Henry. The eldest child was a daughter (Emilie), who later married an inhabitant of the village, named Lefèvre.

His grandmother was his godmother. She called him Jean, after his father, and François, after a saint whom she loved and whose protection she constantly invoked. St. Francis of Assisi, the faithful observer of the things of nature, was a happy choice of a saint for the man who, later, was to be the passionate lover of the works of

House where Millet was born : village of Gruchy, Normandy.

God. Proud of having a boy to rear, the grandmother tended him as her own child and her heart's favorite. In the vague recollections of his babyhood, Millet could always see her busy about him, rocking him, warming him in her bosom, and singing all day long songs which delighted him. I have lived more than thirty years in Millet's intimacy, and I know that the thought of her face, as nurse and comforter, was an ever-recurring image in the heart of her grandson. While he was still a little child, she would come to his bedside in the morning, and say, gently: "Wake up, my little François; you don't know how long the birds have been singing the glory of God!" Her religion, as Millet told me later, was mixed with her love of nature. All that was beautiful, terrible, or inexplicable seemed to her the work of the Creator, to whose will she bowed. "It was a beautiful religion," added he, "for it gave her the strength to love so deeply and unselfishly. She was always ready to work for others, to excuse their faults, to pity or to help them."

I have now come to the notes which Millet himself gave me, when I begged him to write out his youthful remembrances. I possess many pages of manuscript testifying to his love of his family and home, and to the sufferings of his life in Cherbourg and Paris; but the time has not come to say all,—so of these sketches, written by Millet himself, I will only publish as much as propriety allows. When a whole generation has passed away, we shall know a corner of Millet's heart which we may not now unveil—his resignation, his knowledge of men, and how much their ignorance of what is good and generous made him suffer. Here are the precious lines written by Millet concerning his childhood:

"I remember waking one morning in my little bed and hearing the voices of people in the room. With the voices sounded a sort of *burrr*, which stopped now and then and began again. It was the sound of the spinning-wheels, and the voices of the women spinning and carding wool. The dust of the room came and danced in the sunshine which one small, high window let in. I have often seen the sun and the dust in the same way, for the house fronted east. In the corner of the room was a big bed, covered by a counterpane with wide stripes of red and brown, falling down to the floor; next to the window at the foot of the bed, against the wall, a great wardrobe, brown too. It is all like a vague dream. If I had to recall, even a little, the faces of the poor spinners, all my efforts would be in vain, for, although I grew up before they died, I remember their names only because I have heard them spoken in the family.

"One was a great-aunt whose name was Jeanne. The other was a spinner by trade, who often came to the house, and whose name was Colombe Gamache. This is my earliest recollection. I must have been very young when I received that impression, for more distinct images seem to have been made after a lapse of time.

"I only remember indescribable impressions, such as hearing, on waking, the coming and going in the house, the geese cackling in the court-yard, the cock-crowing, the beat of the flail on the barn floor—all sounds in my ears out of which no particular emotion came.

"Here is a little clearer fact. The commune had had new bells made, two of the old ones having been carried away to make cannon and the third having been broken (as I heard afterward). My mother was curious to see the new bells, which were deposited in the church, waiting to be baptized before being hung in the tower, and she took me with her. She was accompanied by a girl named Julie Lecacheux, whom I afterward knew very well. I remember how struck I was at finding myself in a place so terribly vast as the church, which seemed to me bigger than a barn, and also with the beauty of the great windows, with lozenge-shaped leads.

"We saw the bells, all on the ground. They, too, seemed enormous, for they were much larger than I was; and then (what probably fixed the whole scene in my mind) Julie Lecacheux, who held a very big key in her hand,

probably that of the church, began to strike the largest bell, which gave out a great sound, filling me with awe. I have never forgotten that blow of the key on the bell.

"I had a great-uncle who was a priest; he was very fond of me, and trotted me about with him continually. He took me once to a house where he often went. The lady of the house was elderly, and remains in my mind as the type of a lady of the olden time. She petted and kissed me, and gave me a great honey-cake, and, besides, a peacock's feather. I remember how delicious I thought the honey, and how beautiful the feather! I had already been struck with admiration at seeing, as we entered the court-yard, two peacocks perched in a big tree, and I could not get over the fine eyes in their tails.

"Sometimes my great-uncle took me to Eculleville, a little commune adjoining. The house to which he took me was a sort of seigniorial dwelling, which was called the Eculleville mansion. There was a servant named Fanchon. The head of the house, whom I never knew, had a taste for rarities, and had planted some pine-trees. You would have had to go a great way to find so many elsewhere. Fanchon occasionally gave me some pine-cones, which filled me with delight.

"My poor great-uncle was so afraid of something happening to me that if I were not beside him he could not breathe. As I was already big enough to run fast, I went off one day with some other boys, and we went down to the sea-shore. Looking for me everywhere, and not finding me, he went toward the sea, and saw me leaning over the pools which the sea left at ebb-tide, and where I was trying to catch bull-heads. He called me with such a cry of horror that I jumped up, and saw him on the cliff making an urgent sign for me to come up. I did not let him repeat it, for he had frightened me; if there had been another way than the narrow path at the top of which he was waiting for me, I would have gone up it, but the cliff was too steep.

"When he had me up safe, he got angry. He took his three-cornered hat and beat me with it, and as the cliff was still very steep toward the village, and my little legs did not carry me very fast, he followed me, beating me with his hat, and as red as a cock with anger. At each blow he would say: 'Ah, I'll help you mount.' It gave me a great fear of the three-

cornered hat. Poor uncle! All the following night he had nightmares; he woke up every little while, crying out that I was falling down the cliff.

"As I was not of an age to understand a tenderness which showed itself by blows with a hat, I gave him many another torment. Once during mass I was whispering with some other boys; he from his place coughed to make me quiet; I stopped a moment, and then began again. Then he came and took me by the arm, to make me kneel down under the lamp in the middle of the choir. Without knowing how (for I was never so silly as to resist the punishments which I received), somehow I caught my foot in his surplice and tore it. Overcome by such an act of impiety, he left me without the punishment he had intended inflicting, and went back, horrified, to his place until the end of the mass. I had no consciousness of the outrage of which I had been guilty, and was very much surprised, when all had returned from mass, to hear him, with great emotion, tell the whole family the abomination I had committed, and which he looked upon as a sort of sacrilege. Such an action to a priest made him predict the most fearful things for my future.

"The consternation of the whole family is indescribable. I did not understand why I had become suddenly an object of horror, and my fright could not have been greater. The rest I have forgotten. Time has dropped a veil over that, as over other things. I don't know whether I was punished or not.

"This I remember hearing about my great-uncle; he was brother of my father's father. He had been a laborer all his life, and had become a priest rather late. I think he had a little church at the time of the Revolution. I know that he was persecuted, for I have heard that men came to search the house of my grandfather, to whom he had returned, and that they made their search in the most brutal manner. He was very inventive, and had contrived a hiding-place which communicated with his bed, and into which he threw himself when any one came. One day they entered so suddenly that the bed had not had time to cool, and although they were told that he was not there, they cried:

"'Yes, yes, he is here,—the bed is still warm,—but he has found some way of getting off.'

"He heard them. They turned the house upside down in their fury, and went away.

A Spinner.

"He said mass, whenever he could, in the house, and I have still the leaden chalice which he used. After the Revolution, he remained with his brother and performed the duties of vicar of the parish. He went every morning to the church to say mass. After breakfast, he went to work in the fields. He almost always took me with him. Arrived at the field, he took off his *soutane* and worked in shirt-sleeves and breeches. He had the strength of a Hercules. There still exist, and they will last a long time, some great walls which he built to hold up a piece of sliding ground. These walls are very high, and built of immense stones. They have a cyclopean look. I have heard my grandmother and my father say that he allowed no one to help him even to place the heaviest stones, and some of them would require the combined strength of five or six men, and then using levers.

"He had a most excellent heart. He taught, for the love of God, the poor children of the commune, whose parents could not send them to school. He even taught them a little Latin. This made his *confrères* of the neighboring communes very indignant; they went so far as to write about it to the bishop of Coutances. I have found among some old papers the rough draft of the letter he addressed to the bishop in justification, and in which he said that he lived with his brother, who was a laborer, that in the commune there were very poor children who would have been deprived of every sort of instruction, that pity had decided him to teach them what he could, and he begged the bishop in the name of charity not to prevent him from teaching these poor little ones to read. I think I have heard that the bishop finally consented to let him continue. Very magnanimous, to be sure! * * * When he died I was about seven years old, and it is curious to realize how deep are the impressions of an early age, and what an indelible mark they leave upon the character. My childish mind was filled with stories of ghosts and all sorts of supernatural things. To this day I enjoy them, but whether I believe them or not I can not say. The day that my great-uncle was buried, I heard them speaking in a mysterious way about the manner in which he should be buried. They said that at the head, on the coffin, must be laid some big stones covered with bundles of hay; 'their instrument got embarrassed in the straw, and then broke on the stones, which made it impossible for them to hook the head and draw the body out of the grave.' Afterward I

knew what this mysterious language meant, but from the time of the burial, several neighbors, with the servant of the house, who all had hot cider to drink, passed the night, armed with guns and scythes, watching the grave. This guard was continued for about a month. After that they said there was no more danger. This was the reason: some men were said to make a profession of digging up bodies for doctors. They knew when a person died in a commune, and they came immediately at night to steal it. Their way of doing was to take a long screw and work through the earth and the coffin, catching the head of the dead man; with a lever they drew the body out of the grave without disturbing the earth. They had been met leading the dead man, covered with a cloak, holding him under the arms and talking to him as if he were a drunken man, shaking him and telling him to stand up. Others were seen with the body behind them on horseback, the arms held around the waist of the rider, and always covered with a great cloak, but the feet of the body were seen below the cloak.

"Some months before the death of my great-uncle I had been sent to school, and I remember well that the day he died the maid-servant was sent to bring me home, so that I should not be seen playing in the road under such solemn circumstances. Before sending me to school I had, doubtless, at home learnt my letters and how to spell, as the other children thought me very clever. Heaven knows what they called clever. My introduction to the school was for the afternoon class. When I arrived in the court-yard where the children were playing, the first thing I did was to fight. The bigger children who brought me were proud of bringing to school a child of six and a half who already knew his letters, and besides I was large for my age, and so strong that they assured me that there was not one of my age, or even of seven, who could beat me. There were none there less than seven, and as they were all anxious to make sure of the matter, they brought up a boy who was considered one of the strongest, to make us fight. It must be confessed that we had no very powerful reasons for not liking each other, and perhaps the combat was rather lukewarm. But they had a way of interesting the honor of the parties concerned. They took a chip, and putting it on the shoulder of one, said to the other, 'I bet you don't dare knock that chip off!' If you did not want to seem a coward, you knocked it off. The

other, of course, could not endure such an insult, so the battle was in earnest. The big ones excited those whose side they had taken, and the fighters were not separated. One must conquer. I turned out the stronger, and covered myself with glory. Those who were for me were very proud, and said: 'Millet is only six and a half, and he has beaten a boy more than seven years old.'"

When twelve years old, François Millet went to be confirmed at the church of Gréville. He could not learn anything by heart, but a young vicar found his answers so full of good sense that he asked him if he did not want to learn Latin.

"With Latin, my boy, you can become a priest or a doctor."

"No," said the child; "I don't wish to be either; I wish to stay with my parents."

"Come, all the same," said the vicar; "you will learn."

So the child went to the parsonage with several little companions. He translated the *Epitome Historiæ Sacræ* and the *Selectæ e Profanis*. Virgil came under his eyes,—although translated by the Abbé Desfontaines, this book, half Latin, half French, charmed him so much that he could not stop reading it. The Bucolics and Georgics captivated his mind. At the words of Virgil, "It is the hour when the great shadows descend toward the plain," the child was filled with emotion; the book revealed to him his own surroundings—the life in which he was growing up. Some time after, the vicar, the Abbé Herpent, was sent to the curacy of Heauville, a village a few miles from Gréville. It was decided that the little François should go with the Abbé to continue his lessons. After four or five months with the Abbé Herpent, he begged his grandmother so hard not

to be made to leave home again, that it was decided that he should not go. A new vicar had come to the village, the Abbé Jean Lebrisseux, who was willing to continue the child's instruction. The good man liked to make him talk about his first impressions, and often took him with him to see the curé of Gréville, a gentle and sickly man, who encouraged the child in his confidences. The school-boy told him his innocent love of nature, his wonder at the clouds and their movements, his thoughts about the sky, and the dangers of the ocean, his reading of the Bible and Virgil, and the poor curé would say:

"Ah, poor child, you have a heart that will give you trouble one of these days; you don't know how much you will have to suffer!"

A professor of the College of Versailles, who was born in the neighborhood, took François out walking one day, and was greatly astonished by the boy's observations, and by the extraordinarily poetic turn of his mind.

The schooling of Millet, begun by the good vicar Jean Lebrisseux, was often interrupted by field-work. He did not go any further than the *Appendix de Diis et Heroibus Poeticis* of P. Jouvency, and had to give up Virgil. He was soon obliged to be a serious help to his father, and to devote all his time to the rough farm-work. He was the eldest of the sons, and in this lay a duty which François accepted without regret. He began to work beside his father and the "hands," to mow, make hay, bind the sheaves, thresh, winnow, spread manure, plow, sow,—in a word, all the work which makes the daily life of the peasant. So he spent years, the companion of his

father and mother in the hardest labor, his only amusement the gatherings of the family.

Millet devoured hungrily the books of the home library, the "Lives of the Saints," the "Confessions of St. Augustine," "St. Francis of Sales," "St. Jerome," especially his letters, which he liked to re-read all his life, and the religious philosophers of Port Royal, and Bossuet, and Fénelon. As to Virgil and the Bible, he re-read them, always in Latin, and was so familiar with their language that in his manhood I have never seen a more eloquent translator of these two books. He was not, therefore, as has been said, an ignorant peasant up to the time of his coming to Paris. On the contrary, his education was rapid, and rather by eye and reason than by grammar. As a child he wrote well, and when he reached Cherbourg he was already an educated man, full of reading, and one who did not confuse unhealthy literature with that which could be of use to him.

At his father's house, in the midst of his work, the vague idea of art began to take form in his mind. Some old engravings in the Bible gave him the desire to imitate them, and every day, at the noonday rest, alone in a room in the house, while his father slept, he studied the perspective of the landscapes before him. He drew the garden, the stables, the fields with the sea for horizon, and often the animals which went by. His father, more watchful than asleep, did not say a word, and sometimes got up softly to peep at what François was doing.

The sea was for François Millet the occasion both of study and of profound feeling. He wished to reproduce its greatness and terror. A recollection of the ocean storms remained all his life with

him. I will give one of his many impressions, which tells in his simple and pathetic way the horrors of a disaster which befell his village:

"It was All Saints' day; in the morning we saw that the sea was very rough, and every one said there would be trouble; all the parish was in church; in the middle of mass we saw a man come in dripping wet,—an old sailor, well known for his bravery. He immediately said that as he came along shore he saw several ships which, driven by a fearful wind, would certainly shipwreck on the coast. 'We must go to their assistance,' said he, louder, 'and I have come to say to all who are willing that we have only just time to put to sea to try and help them.' About fifty men offered themselves, and, without speaking, followed the old sailor. We got to the shore by going down the cliff, and there we soon saw a terrible sight,—several vessels, one behind the other, driving at a frightful speed against the rocks.

"Our men put their boats to sea, but they had hardly made ten strokes when one boat filled with water and sunk, the second was overturned with the breakers, and the third thrown up on shore. Happily no one was drowned, and all reached the shore. It was easy to see that our boats would be of no use to the poor people on the ships.

"Meantime the vessels came nearer, and were only a few fathoms from our black cliffs, which were covered with cormorants. The first, whose masts were gone, came like a great mass. Every one on shore saw it coming; no one dared speak. It seemed to me, though only a child, as if death were playing with a handful of men, whom it intended to crush and swallow. An immense wave lifted itself like an angry mountain, and wrapping the vessel brought her near, and a still higher one threw her upon a rock level with the water. A frightful cracking sound,—the next instant the vessel was filled with water. The sea was covered with wreckage,—planks, masts, and poor drowning creatures. Many swam and then disappeared. Our men threw themselves into the water, and, with the old sailor at their head, made tremendous efforts to save them. Several were brought back, but they were either drowned or broken on the rocks. The sea threw up several hundred,

and with them merchandise and food. For days following, the people came back after these forlorn waifs of the sea, and stored them, all damaged with the salt water, in their cellars.

"But this was not all. A second ship approached. The masts were gone. Every one was on the deck, which was full; we saw them all on their knees, and a man in black seemed to bless them. A wave as big as our cliff carried her toward us. We thought we heard a shock like the first, but she held stanch and did not move. The waves beat against her, but she did not budge. She seemed petrified. In an instant every one put to sea, for it was only two gun-shots from shore. A boat was made fast alongside; our boat was filled instantly; one of the boats of the ship put off, threw out planks and boxes, and in half an hour every one was on shore. The ship had been saved by a rare accident; her bowsprit and forepart had got wedged in between two rocks. The wave which had thrown her on the reefs had preserved her as if by a miracle. She was English, and the man who blessed his companions was a bishop. They were taken to the village, and soon after to Cherbourg.

"We all went back again to the shore. The third ship was thrown on the breakers, hashed into little bits, and no one could be saved. The bodies of the unhappy crew were cast up on the sand.

"A fourth, fifth, and sixth were lost—ship and cargo—on the rocks. The tempest was terrific. The wind was so violent that it was useless to try to oppose it. It carried off the roofs and the thatch. It whirled so that the birds were killed,—even the gulls, which are accustomed, one would think, to storms. The night was passed in defending the houses. Some covered the roofs with heavy stones, some carried ladders and poles, and made them fast to the roofs. The trees bent to the ground, and cracked and split. The fields were covered with branches and leaves. It was a fearful scourge. The next day, All Souls' day, the men returned to the shore; it was covered with dead bodies and wreckage. They were taken up and placed in rows along the foot of the cliffs. Several other vessels came in sight; every one was lost on our coast. It was a desolation like the end of the world. Not one could be saved. The rock smashed them like glass, and threw them in atoms to the cliffs.

"Passing a hollow place, I saw a great sail covering what looked like a pile of merchandise. I lifted the corner and saw a heap of dead bodies. I was so frightened that I ran all the way home, where I found mother and grandmother praying for the drowned men. The third day another vessel came. Of this one they found possible to save part of the crew, about ten men, whom they got off the rocks. They were all torn and bruised. They were taken to Gruchy, cared for for a month, and sent to Cherbourg. But the poor wretches were not rid of the sea. They embarked on a vessel going to Havre; a storm took them, and they were all lost. As for the dead, all the horses were employed for a week in carrying them to the cemetery. They were buried in unconsecrated ground; people said they were not good Christians.

"Some days after, I found upon the sand a small piece of carved wood, which came, no doubt, from one of the vessels lost on our coast. When my mother saw it, she scolded me well, made the sign of the cross, and bid me carry it back to the place where I found it, and ask God's pardon for my theft. This I hastened to do, very much ashamed of my action.

"Since that time I have seen many tempests in my country, but none have left with me such an image of destruction,—such an impression of the littleness of man and of the power of the sea."

II.

Millet begins his Art Studies.

IT was thus that François spent his early days, in the midst of his family, whom he dearly loved, in the heart of a country which was the source of all his inspiration, reading and drawing, and without thinking of leaving his father's house,—his only ambition to accomplish his duties as a son, to plow his furrow in peace, and to turn up the earth whose odor delighted his young senses. His whole life, he thought, would be passed in this way. Coming home one day from mass, he met an old man, his back bowed, and going wearily home. He was surprised at the perspective and movement of the bent figure. This was for the young peasant the discovery of foreshortening. With one glance he understood the mysteries of planes advancing, retreating, rising, and falling. He came quickly home, and taking a lump of charcoal, drew from memory all the lines he had noted in the action of the old man. When his parents returned from church they instantly recognized it—his first portrait made them laugh.

Millet was eighteen; his father was deeply moved by the revelation of this unforeseen talent. They talked the matter over, and François admitted that he had some desire to become a painter. His father only said these touching words:

"My poor François, I see thou art troubled by the idea. I should gladly have sent you to have the trade of painting taught you, which they say is so fine, but you are the oldest boy, and I could not spare you; now that your brothers are older, I do not wish to prevent you from learning that which you are so anxious to know. We will soon go to Cherbourg and find out whether you have talent enough to earn your living by this business."

François then finished two drawings that he had imagined. One represented two shepherds, the first playing the flute at the foot of a tree, the other listening near a hill-side, where sheep were browsing; the shepherds were in jackets and wooden shoes, like those of his village, the hill-side was a field with apple-trees, belonging to his father. The second drawing represented a starry night—a man coming out of a house and giving some bread to another man, who accepted it anxiously. Under the drawing were the words of St. Luke, in Latin: "Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." This drawing I have been familiar with for thirty years; it is the work of a man who already knows the great bearings of art, its effects and resources; it seems like the sketch of an old master of the seventeenth century.

There was then giving lessons at Cherbourg a painter called Mouchel, a pupil of the school of David. The father and son went to

see him, and took the two drawings above mentioned. Mouchel had no sooner seen them than he said to the father:

"You must be joking. That young man there did not make the drawings all alone."

"Yes, indeed," said the father. "I assure you, I saw him make them."

"No, no. I see the method is very awkward, but he never could have composed that—'tis impossible."

The Millets asserted so energetically that it was the work of François, that Mouchel had to believe it. He then turned to the father, and said:

"Well, you will go to perdition for having kept him so long, for your child has the stuff of a great painter!"

From that moment the career of Millet was decided; his father even urged it, and arranged his apprenticeship with Mouchel. Mouchel was a strange and original fellow—he deserves notice in the biographies of Normandy painters. He had studied at the Seminary and had married a good peasant woman, who lived with him at Roule, in a little valley where he cultivated his garden, near a mill which belonged to him, and whose musical tic-tac could be heard in the studio. He loved art to fanaticism. Teniers, Rembrandt, and Brauwer were his idols. He loved the country and animals, and passed hours *tête-à-tête* with a pig, whose dialect and confidences he pretended to understand. He began, with a great facility and a certain taste, large canvases, which he did not always finish. The curés of the villages asked him for pictures, which he executed promptly, and gave gratis to the churches. He was a sort of anchorite, with a

face like St. John the Baptist, illumined with the love of nature and of the masters.

He was first religious, then a free-thinker, again came back to the fold of the church. At one time he was laughing at the confessional and quarreling with his curé; then he would return to the confessional, alarmed at his schismatical liberties. He ended by dying impenitent, refusing to see any "black man."

Millet was two months with Mouchel. He copied engravings and drew from the round. Mouchel would not give him any advice: "Draw what you like, choose what you please here, follow your own fancy—go to the museum." He was busy copying at the museum of Cherbourg when the servant of the family came to him with the announcement that his father was dangerously ill. Millet made one fierce rush from Cherbourg to Gruchy. He found his father dying of a brain fever. He had not even the consolation of hearing his voice for the last time, or seeing his eyes turned upon him: the poor man was voiceless and senseless; his brain had already lost consciousness; he could not even feel the loving pressure of his hand in his son's. To Millet it seemed a double death, the death that all men must die, and the death of a father who could not even, like dying Isaac, touch the garment of his child.

François tried to keep the old farm going on in the old way, but his heart was heavy with his bereavement, and beside, art had made itself felt in him. The notabilities of Cherbourg, not seeing the young peasant painting, tried to do something for him. His grandmother heard some rumors of it, and said: "My François, you must accept the will of God; your father, my Jean-Louis, said you should

be a painter; obey him, and go back to Cherbourg." There he entered the studio of Langlois, who also gave him very little advice. A great amusement for Millet at this time was reading. He read everything—from the *Almanach boiteux*, of Strasbourg, to Paul de Kock, from Homer to Béranger; he also read with delight Shakspere, Sir Walter Scott, Byron, Cooper, Goethe's "Faust," and German ballads. Victor Hugo and Chateaubriand had especially impressed him. The emphatic style of the author of "Atala" and "René" did not displease him; under his stilted manner he recognized a love of the past, a touching recollection of his family and country, and a bitterness of life which he, too, felt. As to Victor Hugo, his great poetic pictures of the sea and the splendors of the sky, his bronze-like rhythm, shook him like the word of a prophet. He wished to throw out all the exaggerations and make up a Victor Hugo of his own, of two or three volumes, which would have been the Homer of France. The contents of the libraries of Cherbourg were all passed in review, and when he got to Paris he was already a cultivated man, familiar with letters,—though this fact was little seen, as he was suspicious of the opinion of great cities, and scarcely answered questions put to him. He knew a clerk of a library in Cherbourg, who got him books and became his companion and friend. This was M. Feuardent, whose son married, later, Millet's eldest daughter.

This is what he said about his studious youth:

"I never studied systematically. At school, when writing from dictation, my task was better written than the others, probably because I read constantly, and the words and phrases were pictured rather in my eyes than in my mind,

and I instinctively reproduced them. I never followed programmes; I never learned a lesson by heart; all my time was spent in writing capital letters and drawing. I never could get beyond addition in mathematics, and I do not understand subtraction and the rules following. My reckoning is always in my head, and by ways that I could not explain. I came to Paris with all my ideas of art fixed, and I have never found it necessary to change them. I have been more or less in love with this master, or that method in art, but I have not modified any fundamental opinions. You have seen my first drawing, made at home without a master, without a model, without a guide. I have never done anything different since. You have never seen me paint except in a low tone; *demi-teinte* is necessary to me in order to sharpen my eyes and clear my thoughts,—it has been my best teacher."

The young painter from the country made some little noise in the town of Cherbourg. People talked about his work and the boldness of his handling, and the general opinion was that he ought to be sent to Paris to study. On the other hand, Langlois watched the progress of his scholar like a hen who has hatched a young eagle; he let him exercise himself as he chose, in portraiture or Biblical subjects. Sometimes he got Millet to help him on his religious pictures. At the Church of the Trinity at Cherbourg may be seen two large pictures from sacred history, at which Millet worked with Langlois, on delicate parts, such as the drapery and the hands. Langlois felt, however, that he could not teach Millet anything; he therefore addressed the municipal council of Cherbourg a petition, which led them to vote an annuity of four hundred francs for Millet's education. The general council of La Manche added later six hundred francs, which should be paid until the completion of the young artist's studies. Millet told me several times that this annuity did not last long, and that it was far from being sufficient for his needs; soon

the little pension from the town of Cherbourg ceased, through lack of funds.

It was a great event in the Millet family when François departed for a place so far away,—a city which had the reputation of being so corrupt as Paris. Mother and grandmother loaded their dear child with warnings against the seductions of this new Babylon.

"Remember," the grandmother repeated again and again, "remember the virtues of your ancestors; remember that at the font I promised for you that you should renounce the devil and all his works. I would rather see you dead, dear son, than a renegade, and faithless to the commands of God."

He went off in a fever of expectation and of distress at leaving these two poor women a prey to all the troubles which beset unprotected widows. He took with him some savings which his mother and grandmother gave him at leaving, and which, joined to the pension of the city, made a sum of six hundred francs. He felt embarrassed by so much wealth.

"I always had my mother and grandmother on my mind, and their need of my arm and my youth. It has always been almost like remorse to think of them, weak and ill at home, when I might have been a prop to their old age; but their hearts were so motherly that they would not have allowed me to leave my profession to help them. Besides," he would add, "youth has not the sensitiveness of manhood, and a demon pushed me toward Paris. I wanted to see all, know all that a painter can learn. My masters at Cherbourg had not spoiled me during my apprenticeship. Paris seemed to me the great center of knowledge and a museum of everything fine and great.

"I went off with a full heart. All that I saw on the way to Paris made me still sadder. The great straight roads, the trees in long lines, the flat fields, the pasture-lands so rich and so filled with animals that they seemed to

me more like scenes in a theater than reality! Then Paris, black, smoky, muddy, where I arrived at night, and which was to me the most discouraging sensation of all.

"I got to Paris one Saturday evening in January, in the snow. The light of the street-lamps, almost put out by the fog, the immense quantity of horses and wagons passing and repassing, the narrow streets, the smell and the air of Paris, went to my head and my heart so that I was almost suffocated. I was seized with a sobbing which I could not control. I wanted to get the better of my feelings, but they overcame me with their violence. I could only stop my tears by washing my face with water, which I took from a street-fountain.

"The coolness gave me courage. A print-seller was there,—I looked at his prints and munched my last apple. The lithographs displeased me very much; loose scenes of *grisettes*, women bathing and at their toilettes, such as Devéria and Maurin then drew; they seemed to me signs for perfumery or fashion-plates. Paris seemed to me dismal and tasteless. For the first, I went to a little hotel, where I spent the night in a sort of nightmare, in which I saw my home, full of melancholy, with my mother, grandmother, and sister spinning in the evening, weeping and thinking of me, praying that I should escape the perdition of Paris. Then the evil demon drove me on before wonderful pictures, which seemed so beautiful, so brilliant, that it appeared to me they took fire and vanished in a heavenly cloud.

"My awakening was more earthly. My room was a hole with no light. I got up and rushed to the air. The light had come again, and I regained my calmness and my will. My sadness remained, and I remembered the complaint of Job: 'Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said there is a man child conceived.'

"So I greeted Paris, not cursing it, but with the terror that came from not comprehending its material and spiritual life, and full, too, of desire to see those famous masters of whom I had heard so much, and some little scraps of whom I had seen at the museum of Cherbourg."

III.

Millet in Paris — First Visits to the Luxembourg and the Louvre — Enters Delaroche's Studio.

IT was in January, 1837, that Millet arrived in Paris. He had several letters of recommendation for friends or relations of important men in Cherbourg. He went to M. Georges, then an expert in the Royal Museum. Georges received him kindly, and asked him what he could do. Millet unrolled a big drawing, some six feet high, on paper. Georges, surprised, showed it to his friends and pupils, who were there, and who cried out: "We didn't know they could do this in the provinces!" "It is very good," repeated M. Georges; "you must stay with me; it will be of great use to you. I can let you see the museums, introduce you to celebrated artists, and get you into the School of the Beaux Arts, where you can compete, and where you will be sure soon to get the prize, at the rate you are going."

Millet went away, leaving his drawing. He intended returning to see M. Georges, but on the way he thought of the school, the competition for prizes, and the discipline that all who enter a school

must, of course, submit to. "All this seemed to me a constraint which I could not contemplate without horror. I said to myself that M. Georges, who had been so kind, and seemed so sure of guiding me,—how difficult it would be to make him understand that this way of study, striving to excel others, who were unknown to me, in cleverness and quickness, was antipathetic!" In fact, Millet resolved not to return to M. Georges, and the drawing was sent back to him later.

At the house of Monsieur L—— (to whom he had a letter), they gave him a clean little room on the fifth floor, that looked out over the roofs and chimneys of a court-yard:

"Life at M. L——'s was very weary. Mme. L—— was a cross woman, who tried to make me go to see the sights of Paris,—the dancers, the students' balls,—and who reproached me with my awkward ways and my timidity. The house froze me, and I was only happy on the quays. One day I went to the Chaumière; the dances of this pushing crowd of people disgusted me; I preferred the heavy pleasures and real drunkards of the country.

"In the beginning of my stay, I had given to Mme. L—— my trunk, containing all my linen and belongings and a few hundred francs. In a month I had spent fifty francs in pictures and dinners, for I was so wretchedly fed that I was obliged to go and eat at the restaurants where the cabmen congregated, one of whom had recognized me as a fellow-townsman.

"One morning I asked Mme. L—— for five francs, whereupon she made a scene so terrible to me that I threw down the money, and saying, 'Madame, we are quits!' I left the house, with thirty sous and the clothes I had on my back. Her husband wrote to say that of course it would be impossible for me to return to their house, but if I would go to his office he would indemnify me for the loss occasioned by the injustice of his wife. I went. He made many protestations, but gave me nothing. He paid my lodging—about fifty

francs — three months later, but was obliged by his wife to ask me not to see him again. A year later I was taken very ill, almost to death. I lost consciousness, and was twenty-one days in a sort of lethargy. When I recovered consciousness I found myself in the country, at the house of a friend of M. L——'s, who had had me carried to Herblay, near Montmorency. It was in June, at haying-time; and while taking my first walk in the garden I tried to mow, and fell fainting. This distressed me greatly. I felt myself no longer a man of the country, and I was humiliated. I recovered, and it was thanks to M. L——, but *how* I have never known, as I never saw him again.

"I never could explain the conduct of Mme. L——. Her servant, whom I met once, hinted that she was rather free in her reading, and that I had not understood her game."

To tell the truth, Millet had not the slightest understanding of this feminine character. It seems that, like Joseph, he met at the outset of life a "Potiphar's wife."

"During the first days of my stay in Paris, my fixed idea was to go and see the old museum. I went out early with this intention, yet, being afraid to ask the way for fear of being laughed at, I wandered at random, hoping the museum would come to meet me. I got lost day after day in looking for it. In this search I finally came upon Nôtre-Dame, which I thought less beautiful than the cathedral of Coutances. The Luxembourg seemed to me a fine palace, but too regular, and like the work of a coquettish and mediocre builder. Finally, without knowing how, I found myself on the Pont Neuf, from which I saw a magnificent building which I thought must be the Louvre, from the descriptions I had heard of it. I went to it, and mounted the great stair-way with a beating heart. At last one great object of my life was attained.

"I had imagined correctly what I should see. It seemed to me that I was in a world of friends, in a family where all that I beheld was the reality of my dreams. For a month the masters were my only occupation during the day. I observed them all, devoured them, analyzed them, and returned to them ceaselessly. The early ones drew me by their admirable expression of

gentleness, holiness, and fervor; the great Italians, by their knowledge and their charm of composition. Sometimes the arrows of St. Sebastian seemed to go through me, when I looked at Mantegna's Martyrs. The masters of that time are magnetic; they give you the joys and sorrows which trouble them; they are incomparable. But when I saw a drawing of Michael Angelo's,—a man in a swoon,—that was another thing! The expression of the relaxed muscles, the planes and modeling of the figure weighed down by physical suffering, gave me a succession of feelings: I was tormented by pain, I pitied him, I suffered with that very body, those very limbs. I saw that he who had done this was capable, with a single figure, to personify the good or evil of all humanity. It was Michael Angelo—that says all. I had already seen mediocre engravings from him in Cherbourg; here I first touched the heart and heard the speech of him who has so haunted me all my life.

"I then went to the Luxembourg. With the exception of the pictures of Delacroix, which I thought great in gesture, invention, and color, I found nothing remarkable,—everywhere wax figures, conventional costumes, and a disgusting flatness of invention and expression.

"The 'Elizabeth' and the 'Princes in the Tower' of Delaroche were there, and I was to go to the studio of Delaroche,—these pictures did not make me wish to go. I could see in them nothing but big illustrations and theatrical effects without real feeling: everywhere posing and stage scenes. The Luxembourg gave me my antipathy to the theater, and although I was not indifferent to the celebrated dramas then being acted, I must confess to having always had a decided repulsion to the exaggerations, the falseness and silliness of actors and actresses. I have since seen something of their little world, and I have become convinced that by always trying to put themselves in some other person's place, they have lost the understanding of their own personality; that they only talk in 'character,' and that truth, common-sense, and the simple feeling of plastic art are lost to them. To paint well and naturally, I think one should avoid the theater.

"Many a time I was half inclined to leave Paris and return to my native village, I was so tired of the lonely life I lived. I saw no one, did not speak to a soul, did not dare ask a question, I dreaded ridicule so much,—and yet no one noticed me. I had the awkwardness which I have never lost, and

which still troubles me when I am obliged to speak to a stranger or ask the simplest question. I was of a great mind to do my ninety leagues in one stretch, like my uncle Jumelin, and say to my family, 'I've come home and I'm done with painting'; but the Louvre had bewitched me. I went back and was consoled. Fra Angelico filled me with visions, and when I returned at night to my miserable lodging, I did not want to think of anything but those gentle masters who made beings so fervent that they are beautiful, and so nobly beautiful that they are good.

"It has been said that I was very much taken up with the eighteenth century masters, because I made copies of Watteau and Boucher. I have a decided repugnance for Boucher. I saw his knowledge, his talent, but I could not look at his suggestive subjects and sad women without thinking it was all a very poor kind of nature. Boucher did not paint naked women, but little undressed creatures: it was not the luxuriant exhibition of the women of Titian, so proud of their beauty, and so sure of their power, that they show themselves naked. It is not chaste, but it is strong, and great in its femininity. It is art, and good art. But the poor little ladies of Boucher, with their thin legs, their feet deformed by high-heeled slippers, their waists pinched by corsets, their useless hands and bloodless breasts, are all repulsive to me. As I stood before the so much copied 'Diana' of Boucher, I thought I could see the *Marquises* of his time, painted by him for no very laudable reason, and whom he had undressed and posed in his studio, which was transformed into a landscape. I went back to the 'Diana' of the antique—so beautiful, so noble, and whose forms are all distinguished. Boucher was only a seducer.

"Nor was Watteau my man. * * * I could see the charm of his palette, and the delicacy of expression of these little stage men condemned to laugh. But I always thought of marionettes, and I said to myself: 'The whole little troupe will be shut up in a box, after the play, to weep over their fate.' I was rather interested in Lesueur, Lebrun, and Jouvenet, because they seemed to me strong. Lesueur had a great effect on me, and I think him one of the great souls of our French school,—as Poussin was the prophet, the sage, and the philosopher, while also the most eloquent teller of a story. I could pass my life face to face with the work of Poussin, and never be tired.

Well, I lived at the Louvre, at the Spanish Museum, the Standish Museum, and among the drawings, and my attention was always directed to the canvases where the thought was concisely and strongly expressed.

"I liked Murillo in his portraits, Ribera in his 'St. Bartholomew' and 'Centaurs.' I liked everything strong, and would have given all Boucher for one of Rubens's nude women. It was only later that I came to know Rembrandt; he did not repel me, but he blinded me. I felt that one must 'make the stations' before entering into the genius of this man. I only knew Velasquez, who is so much sought after nowadays, by his 'Infanta,' in the Louvre. He is certainly a painter '*de race*,' and of purest blood, yet his compositions seem to me empty. 'Apollo and Vulcan' is poor in invention; his 'Winders' are not winding anything. But the painter remains, and a strong painter. I was never tempted to make a copy of these masters. It seemed to me that a copy was an impossibility, and that it could never have the spontaneity and fire of the original. One day, however, I spent the whole day in front of the 'Concert Champêtre' of Giorgione. I could not weary of it. It was already three o'clock when, mechanically, I took a little canvas belonging to a friend, and began a sketch of the picture. Four o'clock sounded, and the dreadful '*on ferme*' of the guardians turned me out: but I had made enough of a sketch to give me pleasure, like a run into the country. Giorgione had opened the country to me. I had found consolation with him. Since then I have been too wise to attempt a copy, even of something of my own; I am incapable of that sort of thing.

"Except Michael Angelo and Poussin, I have held to my first leaning toward the early masters — subjects as simple as childhood, unconscious expression, creatures that say nothing but are full of life, or who suffer patiently without a moan, without a cry, submitting to the law of human life without dreaming of calling any one to account for it. They did not make a revolutionary art, as in our time.

"In the end, I had to decide to learn my trade and go into a studio. I did not think anything of the painters who taught. Hersent, Drolling, Léon Cogniet, Abel de Pujol, Picot, all professors who were then sought after, were to me quite indifferent, and also Ingres, none of whose work I had then seen. I waited on and on, reading Vasari in the library of Ste. Geneviève,

for fear I should be asked questions about the history of the painters and their lives, and finally decided to see some one who would find me a studio. I had a great dread of this future teacher, and kept putting off the evil moment. One morning I got up, determined to brave the worst. Well, I was admitted to the studio of Paul Delaroche, the painter whom every one pointed to as the greatest talent of that time. I trembled when I entered. It was a new world to me, but I got used to it, and ended by being not altogether unhappy. I found some good souls, a kind of cleverness, and a language which I had never dreamed of,—it seemed to me a tiresome and incomprehensible jargon. The puns of the Delaroche studio made the boys famous. They talked about everything, even politics; it was rather too much for me to hear them chatter about the 'Phalanstery,' but I took root at last, and my homesickness was a little mitigated."

Paul Delaroche was the fashionable painter of the day. His *atelier* was divided into two classes, the "cast" for beginners and that of the life models. Millet found a group of young men, not unknown later: Couture, Hébert, Cavalier the sculptor, Gendron, Edouard Frère, Yvon, etc., etc.

In entering this new world, Millet imposed upon himself the strictest silence and circumspection. Like a true peasant, he let others approach him and answered little. They tried to make out this puzzling countryman. They apostrophized, joked, and teased him, but Millet answered nothing, or, with his fists, threatened those who went too far, and, as he was built like a Hercules, they let him alone, giving him the nickname of the "man of the woods." His first drawing was from the Germanicus. On Monday the drawing was begun; it had to be finished by Saturday. On Thursday, Millet had finished his figure. Delaroche came, looked at the drawing a long time, and said: "You are a new-comer. Well, you know too much and not enough." That

was all he said. Couture, who was in the life class, came in to see the antique class, and said to him: "Hello, *nouveau!* Do you know that your drawing is good?" Some time after, he was severely criticised. The originality of his studies, where knowledge was wanting, and where the spirit was everything, surprised the studio, but did not make them understand him. All but one or two pupils considered him as a curious being without a future, an obstinate fellow who took the *pose* of eccentric drawing, a mutineer in the academic camp, a schismatic in their worship of Delaroche. When he passed into the life school he had the same trial. His first figure, nevertheless, was a success. Delaroche said: "It is easy to see that you have painted a great deal." He had, in fact, never touched a palette before. "I only tried," said he, "to express as strongly as possible the attachments of the muscles, without occupying myself with the color medium, of which I was entirely ignorant."

All wished to see the figure, and did not fail to find it "insolently natural." Boisseau, one of the master's pets, used to say: "Eh! Are you coming here to give us some more of your fine figures? Are you going to make men and women on your own plan? You know the master doesn't like this Caen cookery."

"What do I care?" answered Millet. "I don't come here to please anybody. I come because there are antiques and models to teach me, that is all. Do I object to your figures, made of butter and honey?"

In his heart Millet was struck by the insufficiency of the master, who never gave him serious advice, and who did not even make the impression of a man who knows and can teach.

Sometimes the truth came out. To a student who did not render the *ensemble* of a life study, Delaroche said: "Look at Millet,—notice how he sees light on a nude figure."

When Delaroche was painting the "Hemicycle," he often talked of it to the students in his *atelier*. Millet was once much abused by his comrades about a drawing; one of them saying, violently: "There he is again, drawing from *chic*" (out of his head), "and inventing his muscles." Delaroche, coming in at the moment, said: "Gentlemen, the study of nature is indispensable, but you must also know how to work from memory. He is right" (pointing to Millet) "to use his memory. When I began my 'Hemicycle,' I thought that letting the model stand, I could get the attitude of my personages, but I soon found I would have very good models, with no cohesion among them. I saw that one must invent, create, order, and produce figures appropriate to each individuality. I had to use my memory. Do as he does, if you can."

Soon after this, Millet left the *atelier*. A comrade met him one day, and told him the "patron" wanted to see him about some work on the "Hemicycle." Millet deferred to his orders, and went to the Palace of the Beaux Arts. Delaroche was working in the midst of his aids. He came to Millet and drew him into another room, and rolling two cigarettes, silently offered one to Millet, and then said: "Why don't you come to the studio any more?" "Because, sir, I can't pay the janitor's tax." "You are wrong. I don't want you to leave the studio; come back. I have spoken to Poisson" (the janitor), "only don't say anything about it to the others, and do just what you like,—big things, figures, studies,—but don't talk about it to the

others. I like to see your work; you are not like other people, and I will tell you what work you can do with me."

Millet was touched, and went back.

At last the moment came for competition for the great "Prix de Rome." Millet was admitted, and worked with talent at the figure. Delaroche was struck with the original view he had taken of the subject. His conscience was moved. He called Millet, and said:

"You want the 'Prix de Rome'?"

"That is the reason I compete."

"I find your composition very good, but I must tell you that I especially want Roux appointed; but next year I will use all my influence for you."

Edified by this announcement, Millet left the studio, and feeling that he must rely upon himself alone for instruction and protection, he went to Suisse, who had an academy of models.

IV.

Millet Begins Life as an Artist — His First and Second Marriages — Settles in Paris — The Revolution of 1848 — Rousseau.

ONE student in Delaroche's studio had come near to the "man of the woods." It was Marolle, son of a varnish manufacturer, whose family could afford to make the art-life he had chosen easy to him. Musset, at that time, was the *vade mecum* of all the young people. Marolle knew him by heart, declaimed him, painted him, and even wrote verses, which were not without merit, but which had the fault of being too much like the poetry of the author of "Rolla." "Musset gives you a fever," said Millet, "but that is all he knows how to do. A charming mind, capricious, and profoundly poisoned, all he can do is to disenchant, corrupt, or discourage. The fever goes, and one is left without strength, like a convalescent who needs air, sun, and stars."

It is obvious that Millet was not the ignorant laborer that he was called later. Doubtless he always had the prudence and circumspec-

tion of the Normandy peasant. Many visitors, thinking they had to do with an ignorant countryman, began talking about a thousand things which Millet considered useless or false, and he would then meet them with the most obstinate silence. The peasant knew more than the citizen.

Marolle, discontented, seeking his proper vein, used to say to Millet: "You think I am fortunate because I have not got to earn my bread; but you are the happy one! you have youthful impressions and feelings about nature. I never felt anything but the Faubourg Saint Marceau."

Life became difficult in the little studio, Rue de l'Est. Millet's pension came irregularly, if it came at all, and was quite insufficient.

"What shall I do?" said Millet. "People reaping and making hay?"

"You can't sell them," said Marolle.

"Then fauns and forest life?"

"Who knows anything about fauns in Paris?"

"Well, what then?"

"They like Boucher,—Watteau,—illustrations,—nude women. You must do things in that style!"

Millet at last decided to submit to the necessities of life. He did not wish to let his family know of his wants by applying to them. But he made a last effort—a little picture representing Charity,—a melancholy figure with three nurslings. He took his picture himself from shop to shop, and could not get the smallest offer for it. He came home sadly, and said to his friend:

"You are right; give me subjects and I will paint them."

It was at this time that he made a number of pastels, imitations of Boucher and Watteau, which Marolle baptized after his own fashion, with names of that time—"Vert-Vert," "The Old Man's Calendar," "Soldier Proposing to a Nurse," "The Reading of the Novel," "The Late Watch," "A Day at Trianon." Sometimes the artist went back to the Bible, and painted "Jacob and Laban," "Ruth and Boaz." Marolle and Millet took these pictures to the dealers, who were very disdainful, and would only accept them "on sale." The highest price he could get was never more than twenty francs, and when they came to that sum Millet thought he had reached fortune, and the happy day in which he could give himself up to the impressions which his native country had made on him. He painted, also, unsigned portraits for five and ten francs. But he did not neglect his studies. In spite of his struggle against poverty, he worked in the evening at Suisse's and Boudin's. He went to the library of Ste. Geneviève, and examined the works of the most celebrated exponents of form, Albert Dürer, Leonardo da Vinci, Jean Cousin, and Nicolas Poussin, for whom he had the deepest and most lasting admiration. Especially he studied Michael Angelo: read all the biographies, communications, correspondence, and documents concerning this great man, whom he never ceased to consider the highest expression of art.

In these researches, Millet liked to be accompanied by Marolle. Either because he was afraid of learned men, or feared to commit some blunder, he made his friend do the talking. Marolle was a link between Millet and the outer world, which always filled him with a sort of horror, and this function Marolle performed with zeal. The biographers of Millet owe a debt of gratitude to the good comrade,

without whom the great painter would perhaps have succumbed under the difficult trials of his novitiate.

It was in 1840 that Millet first tried to exhibit at the *Salon* of the Louvre. The constitution of the jury made it a formidable trial. The jury was not, as now, an assembly of peers elected by universal suffrage each year. It was the Institute, with its doctrines and antipathies. It acted only according to its own good pleasure. The new school was, with a few exceptions, systematically snubbed. Théodore Rousseau gave up facing the yearly humiliations to which he was subjected. Eugène Delacroix was more fortunate,—only half his pictures were refused. Decamps, whose works were so curiously elaborated, felt the capricious rigor of the authorities. Jules Dupré would not exhibit. Corot, still full of respect for the traditions of Bertin and the judgments of the Academy, advanced step by step toward his beautiful echoes of Claude Lorraine. In spite of his prudence, he was kept away from the *Salon* with the rest. Diaz was despised, but he entered almost forcibly, thanks to his Correggio studies. Millet dared to beard the lion, and sent two portraits, Marolle's and a relation's, M. L. F. The latter only was admitted, and passed unnoticed. Millet told us afterward that it was the poorer of the two; the color was somber and looked like the follies of the Delaroche studio.

When the Exhibition closed he went back to see his Normandy, with the desire to stay and try to get a living at Cherbourg, and be near his family. It was not the first time that he returned. Almost every year he went to breathe his native air and stay some weeks in Gruchy, with his mother and grandmother, who already thought him a wonder, as the Cherbourg papers had spoken of him. In 1838 and

1840 he made several portraits of his family and friends—his mother and grandmother, who were living with one of his brothers. He made two portraits of his grandmother, one a drawing, life size, characterized by a strong expression of austerity. Millet worked on it with great care, as a labor of love. He wanted, he said, to show the soul of his grandmother.

As his pictures did not sell, he accepted commissions for signs, and painted them the size of life: "The Little Milk-girl," for a dry-goods shop; "A Scene of Our African Campaigns," for a tumbler, who paid him the price (thirty francs) in sous; a horse, for a veterinary surgeon; a sailor, for a sail-maker.

Having failed to satisfy the municipality with the portrait of a deceased local dignitary (though they accepted and hung the picture, when he, to cut matters short, gave it to them), Millet was completely cast off by the influential people, who were ashamed of having protected a sign-painter; but such injustice raised friends for him. All the young people were on his side. Indifferent to public opinion, he nevertheless became an object of attention to all who liked noise or opposition; he received some orders for portraits.

Millet was a big, handsome fellow, proud, with gentle eyes. A nice Cherbourg girl, whose portrait he was painting, took compassion on him. Millet married her in 1841, and began to paint portraits of his wife, himself, and several members of his new family, whom he always disliked to speak of. His marriage was not happy. His wife was very delicate; she suffered and faded away, dying in Paris in 1844, after two years and five months of marriage. Millet returned to Paris in 1842. A portrait and picture sent to the *Salon* were both refused.

From 1841 to 1851, Millet's talent changed and assumed a distinct individuality. The blackness and thick shadows of his figures disappeared, and all the traditions of the Delaroche studio. He painted with fervor, with the joy of a man who feels full of life and gifts, and who understands the secrets of the masters. He knows as much as the artists of the eighteenth century, and seems sometimes to remember Restout and Vanloo, and the methods which the old painters of Cherbourg had preserved. But he finds his hand is too clever, and does not follow his mind. Then he stops, studies Michael Angelo and analyzes Correggio. He goes to the Louvre, does not copy, but lives in the atmosphere of the masters. He questions them, tries to understand them. Modeling (which is the sculptural presentation of form bathed in air) engrosses him; it is the first phase of his transformation. He studies it in Correggio, the magician of flesh, the painter of natural grace and strong life.

In 1843 he exhibited nothing. In 1844 he sent two subjects, one "The Riding Lesson," a group of children playing horse—one mounted on the back of another. "At last," said Diaz, "here is a new man, who has the knowledge which I would like to have, and movement, color, expression, too,—here is a painter!"

Millet's life now became still harder, complicated by the sufferings of a dying woman. He was without money, position, or connections. He never spoke of this time without a sort of terror. His material life was a daily fight. He was ready to do anything that chance offered, —had endless difficulties to get the most trifling sums paid. He met people who took advantage of his poverty, who wearied him with their refusals, and went to all lengths of cruelty. A different man

Portrait of Madame Millet.

would have vowed vengeance on this inhuman society—this savage Paris; but Millet did not bear any malice. He merely told the fact, and added: "Yes, there are bad people, but there are good ones also, and one good one consoles you for many bad. I sometimes found helping hands, and I don't complain."

In 1844 he left his own country, to which he returned when he was too hard pressed by trouble. He went to Cherbourg, where he was well received. It must be admitted that his talent had acquired a more appreciable form, his drawing had a persuasive charm, though a little affected. Color was his strongest point; atmospheric harmony, richness of tone, and a peculiar use of rosy gray, gave an attractive warmth to his works. He executed with a rapidity which might be now called rather too easy, but there was so much exuberance of strength, such a passion for covering canvas, that the pleasure of painting overcame colder reason. Afterward he quieted his youthful fire, put on the bit of the most precise drawing; but in those days he was given over to the "Muse of Painting," and threw the reins to his passionate nature. Those who like to divide a painter's career into periods may call this the "florid manner" of Millet, for his painting has all the charm and promise of youth.

This manner is most clearly characterized in the portrait of Mlle. Antoinette Feuardent, 1841. The general harmony is brilliant, even luminous, though it does not reach the fine tone of nature which he afterward possessed. Still you feel that here is a true painter. It is a child of six, bare-footed, on her knees in front of a looking-glass, looking at herself and laughing. She

has a pink silk handkerchief on her head, and leans both hands on the frame of the glass. It is painted on a red preparation, and is full of *brio*.

His first marriage had been unfortunate, but he was not a man who could live alone; a young girl loved him in silence; he finally discovered this, and married the woman who became the mother of his children and the devoted companion of his whole life. They left for Paris in November, 1845, and they stopped at Havre, where several friends expected them. He did all sorts of things—portraits of captains, ship-owners, commanders, and people employed in the port, even sailors. He painted, among other things, a señora in blue and pink, languidly stretched on a divan, a commission given him very specially by a sea-captain. For a moment he became really popular. M. Vanner had a portrait the size of life, others followed suit. These portraits all have a brilliant side, but are too hastily executed. *Genre* pictures and pastels also belong to this time. Widows, "Child bird-nesting," "Old woman coming home with Fagots," "A sewing-woman asleep," "Gypsies," "Temptation of St. Anthony," reapers, fishermen, etc., also a charming "Daphnis and Chloe," full of youth, freshness, and *naïveté*. Already Millet knew how to give each age its form, and, as it were, its moral expression. Another picture is an "Offering to Pan." A girl, a sort of fawn-like creature, is crowning a statue of Pan. The girl's form is modeled in a masterly way. "The flute-lesson," "Youth giving a Girl to drink near a Statue of Bacchus," "Two lovers," "A Girl brushing away the Flies from her sleeping Lover," "Sacrifice to Priapus," "A drunken Bacchante upheld by two young Bacchants," etc., all

executed in a few strokes, and half defiantly. At Havre a public exhibition of his works was organized, and he made a few more portraits. When, at last, not without difficulty, he got nine hundred francs together, he left for Paris with his wife.

Here ends the happy life of Millet. Paris, somber and stubborn, will dispute and fight him. Becoming soon a father, his duty will be to his family, black bread and anxiety will be his portion,—he will never see again either his mother or grandmother. Paris will be a prison to him, and will not even let him go to bid farewell to his old nurses. He will write often to the inhabitants of his native town, the answers will be always touchingly full of tenderness and resignation, but he will always look upon himself as a captive. "I felt," said Millet, "that I was nailed to a rock and condemned to endless labor; but I could have forgotten all if I had only been able once in a while to see again my native place."

Millet and his wife came to Paris in December, 1845, and for a time lived in a modest lodging in Rue Rochechouart, while waiting to go into three mansard rooms in the same street, No. 42 *bis*, where Millet had arranged a very informal studio, whose whole furniture consisted of three chairs and an easel. Above him was the studio of the pupils of Toussaint, the sculptor, and all around an open space where, in the evening, a whole colony of artists, workmen, young fellows, poured out to breathe the fresh air, tell stories, and discuss. Opposite lived Joseph Guichard; Charles Jacque, the clever etcher, lived a little beyond; other neighbors were Séchan and Diéterle, clever scene-painters; Eugène Lacoste, and Azevédo, the musical critic.

At once he began to work. His "St. Jerome Tempted by Women" was fine in effect and in movement; it was superbly painted. Couture sent artists to see this "astonishing piece." While he was painting it, he received a letter from his grandmother:

"You say you are painting a portrait of St. Jerome, groaning under the temptations which besieged his youth Ah, dear child, like him reflect, and gain the same holy profit. Follow the example of a man of your own profession, and say, 'I paint for eternity.' For no reason in the world allow yourself to do wrong. Do not fall in the eyes of God. With St. Jerome, think ever of the trumpet which will call us to the Judgment Seat. * * * Thy mother is ill, and part of the time in bed. I get more and more helpless, and can hardly walk. We wish you a happy and fortunate new year, full of the most abundant blessings of heaven. Let us soon hear from you. We are very anxious to know how you are getting on. We hope well, and embrace you with sincere friendship.

"Thy grandmother,

"LOUISE JUMELIN.

"GRÉVILLE, June 10th, 1846."

At the *Salon* of 1846, the jury refused the St. Jerome, and Millet, being short of canvas, painted over it "Œdipus being taken from the Tree." Tourneux (a fellow-student of the Beaux Arts) had lost no time in discovering Millet. They became intimate, and from that time on, Millet was counted among the family of painters of "The Quarter." Diaz lived near, and came to see him. He was not a cold admirer. The talent of Millet, like that of Rousseau, had the gift of exciting and making him eloquent. He made a tremendous propaganda for Millet, urging amateurs and dealers to get this artist's paintings, if they did not wish to stand in his eyes as blind and incapable.

Œdipus being taken from the Tree.

At this time he painted some charming pastels for Schroth, Durand-Ruel, and Deforges; also, for M. Dugleré and Baroilhet, lovely paintings of naked, innocent women and children. He painted also, "The Age of Gold" (1846); "Young Girl in a Wood"; "Man with a Wheelbarrow full of Grass"; "A Girl with a Lamb" (an often repeated subject); "Bathers," in a sylvan landscape; "Woman seen from behind lying on a Bed"; another nude woman asleep—a fawn looks at her through the foliage (owned by Diaz); "Group of Youths and Maidens resting under the Trees"—happy creatures in a primitive paradise. Up to 1847, Millet painted exterior life in its most unconscious conditions. He did not paint the soul, with its sufferings, as later, but living forms. The artists called him a master of the nude.

For the *Salon* of 1847, he made a picture whose name is the only classic thing about it—the "Œdipus being taken from the Tree." It was painted to show his power in the nude. Every one urged him in this direction, where he made such successes, and in which his natural temperament kept him so many years. You feel that the Œdipus is a fine piece of work, and that the artist, a consummate workman, has only thought of the execution. Millet himself said: "It is a pretext to exercise myself in the nude and in the modeling of light." In truth, the Œdipus is nothing more. Millet makes his mark, but as yet he is neither poet nor thinker. What is most remarkable in this picture, and in many others of the same time, is the ease with which Millet makes real nature with what is not pure reality. He is not a copyist. He uses reality, but transforms it. In his nude figures, his most amorous subjects, you never find an

unwholesome intention. The picture of the "Children with the Wheelbarrow" seems a robust echo of Fragonard; a young peasant such as never existed, shoulders and breast bare, hair flying, and a face bright with the sun of May. In the hands of a painter of the eighteenth century it would be a suggestive study. With Millet it is only fine plastic art, touched by spring-time and youth. So with all his nude paintings. Millet had a sensuous organization and delighted in flesh; but he had an honest soul. In the midst of all our decadence he kept a pure heart.

It was in 1847 that I saw him first. I went with Troyon to his lodging in the Rue Rochechouart. He wore a strange garb, which gave his whole person an outlandish look. A brown-stone-colored overcoat, a thick beard, and long hair covered with a woolen cap like those worn by coachmen, gave his face a character which made one think of the painters of the Middle Ages. His reception was kind, but almost silent. On finding that I had been brought up in the country, and liked his painting, he began to be more expansive. "Every subject is good," said he, "only it must be rendered with strength and clearness. In art, there must be a governing thought expressed eloquently. We must have it in ourselves, and stamp it upon others, just as a medal is stamped. Art is not a pleasure-trip; it is a fight,—a mill that grinds. I am not a philosopher. I don't want to stop pain, or find a formula which will make me indifferent or a stoic. Pain is, perhaps, that which makes the artist express himself most distinctly." He talked for some time, and then was silent, made timid by his own words. When we parted, we felt that we had made the beginning of a serious friendship. I came again

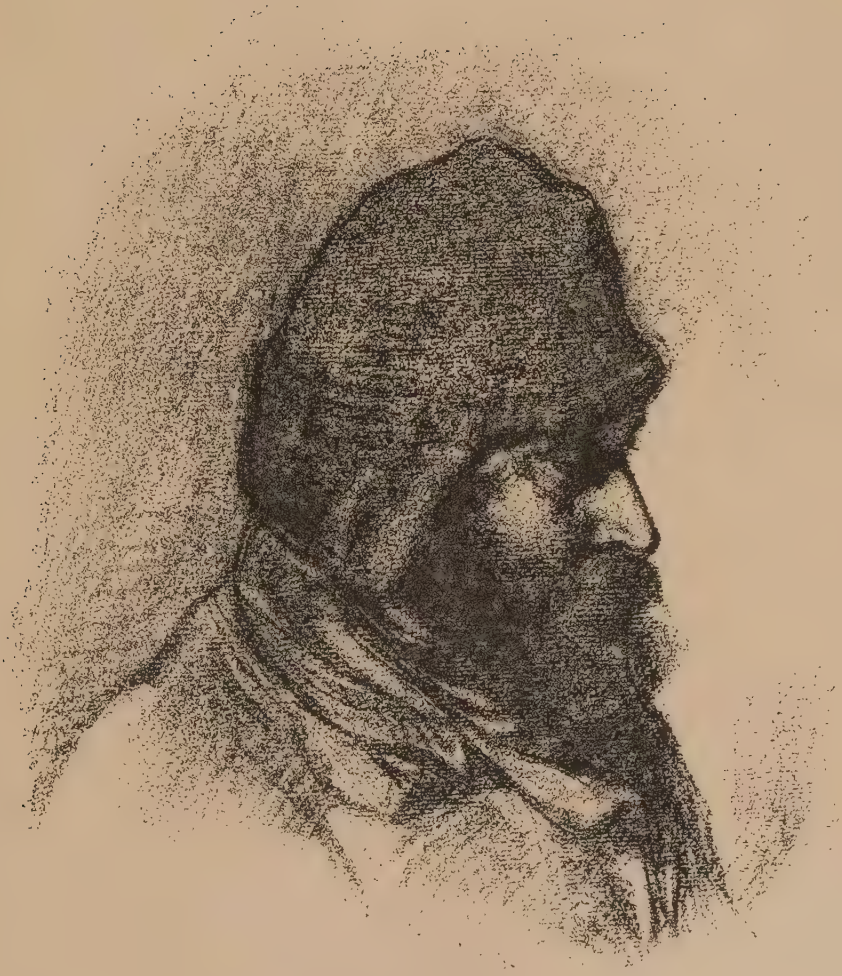
and saw Millet in his home, beside his wife, who hid with dignity the poverty of the household,—he rocking his little children, then slowly returning to his work with the deliberation of one of the oxen of his own country. Especially I loved to see him, brush in hand, executing with marvelous dexterity lovely little compositions which he finished at a sitting with all the magic of his chiaroscuro, and with that sensitive touch which is characteristic of his lightest work.

Millet at this time knew Charles Jacque. He was a man of penetration and enthusiasm. Millet's painting had attracted him; the man had charmed him. He had become a passionate admirer of his talent, and he knew how to express his admiration in just and convincing terms. Jacque was then making his charming etchings, like those of a pupil of Ostade. At dusk we met at Millet's, and there Jacque, Campredon, and others now gone, passed hours before a jug of beer, talking of the ancients and moderns. In these interminable conversations Millet put in a good word, or, now and then, a powerful argument. He was very severe upon the romanticists, dogmatists, and politicians, as well as upon contemporary art. You could see that the air of Paris weighed heavily upon him, and that the chatter of the great city, its literature, its aims and ambitions, its manners and customs, were a world which he could not understand.

In the spring, Millet was taken with a dangerous rheumatic fever, and brought to death's door. He had neither linen nor resources. Séchan, Diéterle, and others came to his rescue with necessaries, not without difficulty. He was given up by all but his devoted friends, and when he did begin slowly to recover he could

scarcely speak or breathe. But youth has its privileges; it forgets quickly, and renews itself with its own vital powers. One morning Millet shook himself "like a wet dog," and began to work with a trembling hand. But the *Salon* of 1848 was to open. Millet finished a "Winnower" and a "Captivity of the Jews in Babylon," and sent them. The jury had been abolished, and everything sent was hung, —the "Winnower" in the *salon carré* and the "Jews" in the long gallery. The first obtained a real success, the second left the public cold.

But this success did not fill the needy purse of the Millets. The Revolution had stopped all picture-buying, and artists suffered the extremest famine. Millet and his wife did not complain; they asked nothing, but we knew their distress. One of us went to the museum, then to the Direction of the Beaux Arts, and got a hundred francs, which we took immediately to the painter. It was at twilight; Millet was in his studio, sitting on a box, his back bent like a man who is chilled. He said "Good-day," but did not move. It was freezing cold in the miserable room. When the money was handed him, he said: "Thank you; it comes in time. We have not eaten for two days, but the important thing is that the children have not suffered. Until to-day they have had food." He called his wife, saying, "I am going to get wood; I am very cold." He did not say another word, and never spoke of it again. A few days after, he moved to the Rue du Delta. In April, M. Ledru-Rollin, urged by Jeanron, came to see him, and gave him a commission of eighteen hundred francs. M. Ledru-Rollin bought also the "Winnower," for five hundred francs; this was a great deal in 1848.



Portrait of Millet (1847).

Then came the insurrection of June. Millet, again overtaken by poverty, was painting a midwife's sign when the first guns were fired. The midwife carried off her sign, and left the artist thirty francs as pay.

"It saved us," said Millet, "for we managed to live two weeks on the money, until the insurrection and the troubles which followed it were quieted. How often I have blessed this unexpected help!"

A few days after, he painted a Samson, asleep beside Delilah, who is about to cut his hair. It is a little picture, of a finely balanced composition and beautiful color. He also painted a "Mercury carrying off the flocks of Argus." But these pictures did not sell. A cover for a song was ordered; Millet made the drawing, and sent the lithographic stone to the publisher. The price was thirty francs: he was paid by insolence; the door was shut in his face.

He then drew two "Liberties," but they sold no better than the others. Jacque advised him to make drawings in exchange for clothes,—six drawings went for a pair of shoes, a picture for a bed. Portraits of Diaz, Barye, Victor Dupré, Vechte, half-length and life-size, were bought for twenty francs, all four, and charming sketches were sold from one franc to five. Charles Jacque collected a quantity of papers on the studio floor—drawings and notes from nature; he bought them, and saved them from being used for the fire.

Like every other Parisian, Millet was armed with a gun during the Revolution, and had to take his place in the defense of the Assembly and the taking of the barricades of the Rochechouart quarter, where he saw the chief of the insurgents fall. He came back

angry and indignant at the slaughters of Paris. He had no military spirit, nor the rage of revolt, and all he saw made his heart bleed.

We used to go together of an evening to the plain of Montmartre or St. Ouen. The next day I would find impressions of the day before, which he had painted in a few hours. His facility was extraordinary, and he never omitted the telling note or charm of color.

He greatly desired an order from the Administration of Fine Arts, and, with this in view, began a fine painting of "Hagar and Ishmael,"—almost nude figures, under a burning light. But he suddenly stopped, and painted on the same canvas "Haymakers resting beside a Hay-cock." This is what caused this sudden change: One evening, standing before Deforges' window, he saw two young men examining one of his pictures, "Women Bathing." "Do you know who painted that?" said one. "Yes," replied the other, "a fellow called Millet, who paints only naked women." These words cut him to the quick,—his dignity was touched. Coming home, he told his wife the story. "If you consent," said he, "I will do no more of that sort of pictures. Living will be harder than ever, and you will suffer, but I will be free to do what I have long been thinking of." Mme. Millet answered, "I am ready. Do as you will." And from that time on, Millet, relieved in a sense from all servitude, entered resolutely into rustic art.

The year 1849 was a difficult time for many painters. Millet, whom fortune was slow to smile upon, was not more happy than his friends; yet he found time and strength to paint a peasant-woman seated, which he sent to the *Salon*,—but in this epoch of political excitement it does not seem to have caused any great interest.

The Bather.

Material life was a problem to be solved every day. He had no other hope than an order from the Minister, and it was a long, difficult piece of work. The figures in "The Hay-makers" were to be half life-size, in the middle of a plain, at rest near a hay-cock. Millet sought long on the banks of the Seine and at St. Ouen, but could find nothing that he could use. He said, "I don't see anything but inhabitants of a suburb; I want a country-woman." However, he finished his work, and had just received the price, when the Revolution of the 13th June, 1849, broke out. The cholera, too, reached its height, and decided Millet and Jacque to leave the city. Furnished with eighteen hundred francs, they went with their families to Barbizon, and stopped at old Ganne's. There had already settled, since June, 1844, Théodore Rousseau, Hughes Martin, Belly, Louis Leroy, and Clerget.

It was at this time that Millet and Rousseau first knew each other; they had merely met at Diaz's. They were neither of them men to enter easily into an intimacy; they took several months to examine one another, and it was not till long after that they talked without constraint. Millet, prudent and discreet, always kept a reserve with Rousseau, which the latter appreciated later. He was never a pupil of Rousseau, as has been stated. When they met they were of equal force: if, afterward, one showed the influence of the other, it was Rousseau, who was drawn by Millet's art toward simplicity of subject and sobriety of line.

Millet and Jacque hired studios—such studios!—in peasant's houses, and set out together to discover the country. I often visited them at this time. They were in such a state of excitement that they

could not paint. The majesty of the old woods, the virginity of the rocks and underbrush, the broken bowlders and green pastures, intoxicated them with beauty and odors. They could not think of leaving such enchantment. Millet found his dream lying before him. He touched his own sphere; he felt the blood of his family in his veins; he became again a peasant.

The following is from his first letter from Barbizon, June 28th, 1849:

"We have determined, Jacque and I, to stay here some time, and we have each taken a house. The prices are very different from those in Paris, and as one can get there easily if necessary, and the country is superb, we will work more quietly than in Paris, and, perhaps, do better things. In fact, we want to stay here some time."

Noon.

V.

Millet at Barbizon—"The Sower"—Deaths of his Grandmother and Mother.

THE "some time" which he was to stay at Barbizon was twenty-seven years,—all the rest of his life.

From the time Millet went to Barbizon he became "the rustic," and gave to his pictures an elevation, a largeness, which have made him unique in our art,—one who speaks a language hitherto unheard. The echo of country life, its eclogues, its hard work, its anxiety, its misery, its peace, the emotions of the man bound to the soil,—all these he will know how to translate, and the inhabitant of the city will see that "the trivial can be made to serve the sublime," and that something noble can be evolved from the commonest acts of life.

His first fever quieted, Millet painted the rustic scenes which struck him—sawyers at work at gigantic trees, wood-gatherers, charcoal-burners, quarrymen worn out with their frightful toil, poachers on the scent, stone-breakers, road-laborers, men plowing, harrowing, and wood-cutting. Each one of these scenes he finished

in a day, sometimes in a couple of hours. Later, he composed and executed with great care a series of little drawings which were to express the whole life of the peasant: first, the man of the soil, in his blouse and *sabots*,—the hero of work, the central point; then, the peasant woman, young, strong, and handsome; then, a series of country scenes, from the mother playing with her child to the poor old woman who goes to cut the dead wood, and brings home on her wretched back a fagot four times as big as herself. This collection is the revelation of an artist of genius. It is a succession of pictures worthy to be placed beside the philosophic compositions of Holbein.

He had taken a little peasant's house with three narrow, low rooms, which served as studio, kitchen, and bed-room for his wife and his three children. Later, when the children increased to nine, the little house was lengthened by two other rooms. A studio was built at the end of the garden, and Millet added a wash-house and a chicken-yard in the middle of a garden which was leased to him. He had two occupations: in the morning he dug or planted, sowed or reaped; after lunch he went into the low, cold, dark room called a studio. He did not dislike this shadowy nook, for there a great part of his works were composed, and all his poetic compositions, sketches, and drawings. His first vision was a Bible subject, "Ruth and Boaz," which he drew on the wall in crayon. They were real peasants,—a harvest scene where the master, as in the Scripture, finds a young gleaner, and leads her blushing to the feast of the country people.

When he had been too long in his dark studio he felt a pain, which soon became a headache of the most violent kind. He was

The Plain of Barbizon.

days and sometimes even weeks under the iron hand of this enemy. To ward off the beginnings of the evil, he would go away into the fields and forest, and walk about with feverish anxiety. We often followed him, with other friends, in his coursing over hill and dale. The open air restored him; then, with a child-like joy, he would climb rocks, jumping, like a stag, to reach at a bound the highest point of the curious granite bowlders which give a magic appearance to the forest of Fontainebleau. *Sabots* on his feet, and wearing an old red sailor's-jacket, and a weather-beaten straw-hat, he was in his element. When tired and overcome by the climb, he threw himself on the ground and cried out, like Goethe: "My God, how good it is under Thy heaven!" And added: "I don't know anything more delicious than to lie on the heather and look up at the sky."

He writes from Barbizon:

"My Dear Sensier: * * * I work like a gang of slaves; the day seems five months long. My wish to make a winter landscape has become a fixed idea. I want to do a sheep picture,—and have all sorts of projects in my head. If you could see how beautiful the forest is! I rush there at the end of the day, after my work, and I come back every time crushed. It is so calm, such a terrible grandeur, that I find myself really frightened. I don't know what those fellows, the trees, are saying to each other; they say something which we can not understand, because we don't know their language, that is all. But I'm sure they don't make *puns*.

"To-morrow, Sunday, is the fête of Barbizon. Every oven, stove, chimney, saucepan, and pot is in such activity that you might believe it was the day before the '*noces de Gamache*.' Every old triangle is used as a spit, and all the turkeys, geese, hens, and ducks which you saw in such good health are at this minute roasting and boiling,—and pies as big as wagon-wheels! Barbizon is one big kitchen, and the fumes must be smelt for miles. * * * Pray give the following order to the frame-maker. * * * Try to have him

make the frames in not too frightfully bad taste. If the gilding should not be so fine, never mind; the form is the point. Send, also, 3 burnt sienna, 2 raw ditto, 3 Naples yellow, 1 burnt Italian earth, 2 yellow ocher, 2 burnt umber, 1 bottle of raw oil. * * * "

It was with the simplest means that he obtained the exquisite tones and transparent effects of his pictures.

While patiently studying the action of his reapers, Millet produced a figure which had long occupied his thoughts. We know what a serious affair the sowing is to an agricultural people. Plowing, manuring, and harrowing are done with comparative indifference, at any rate without heroic passion; but when a man puts on the white grain-bag, rolls it around his left arm, fills it with seed, the hope of the coming year, that man exercises a sort of sacred ministry. He says nothing, looks straight before him, measures the furrow, and, with a movement cadenced like the rhythm of a mysterious song, throws the grain, which falls to the earth and will soon be covered by the harrow. The rhythmic walk of the sower and his action are superb. The importance of the deed is real, and he feels his responsibility. If he is a good laborer, he will know how much seed to throw with every fling of his hand, adjusting the amount sown to the nature of the soil. I have seen sowers who, before they put foot upon the field, would toss a handful of grain into the air in the sign of a cross; then, stepping upon the field, they would pronounce, in a low voice, some indistinct words which sounded like a prayer.

Millet had the idea of the sower in his heart without knowing how to define it. Barbizon formulated the work for him, but the

scene is laid in Gruchy. Although "The Sower" was conceived and executed at Barbizon, it was with the remembrance of Normandy. In point of fact, the first "Sower" by Millet was a young fellow of a wild aspect, dressed in a red shirt and blue breeches, his legs wrapped in wisps of straw, and his hat torn by the weather. It is not at all a man of Barbizon—it is a young fellow of Gréville, who, with a proud and serious step, finishes his task on the steep fields, in the midst of a flock of crows, which fly down upon the grain. It is himself, Millet, who remembers his early life, and finds himself once more upon his native soil. Later, he made several drawings and pastels of a "Sower," all having the look of the people at Barbizon. The action is less dignified, the man is more weighed down, like the people about Paris; and in order that there should be no mistake, Millet made as a frame about him the portrait of the country—the old tower and plain of Chailly.

The first "Sower"* (1850) was executed with fury, but having reached the end of his work, Millet found, like Michael Angelo with his statues, that the stuff was insufficient, the canvas was too short. He traced the lines of his figure exactly, and produced the twin brother, which appeared in the exhibition that opened at the end of the year 1850.† The *Salon* was then at the Palais Royal. With "The Sower" Millet sent "The Sheaf-binders." "The Sower" made some noise; the young school talked about it, copied it, reproduced it in lithography, and it has remained in the memory of artists

* [The first "Sower" is owned by Quincy A. Shaw, Esq., of Boston, who has also a number of other works by Millet.—TRANS.]

† See Frontispiece.

as Millet's *chef-d'œuvre.* Théophile Gautier was touched by it. In the following quotation we see the impression made by this virile work:

"'The Sower,' by M. J.-F. Millet, impresses us as the first pages of the 'Mare au Diable' of Georges Sand, which are about labor and rustic toil. The night is coming, spreading its gray wings over the earth; the sower marches with a rhythmic step, flinging the grain in the furrow; he is followed by a cloud of pecking birds; he is covered with dark rags, his head by a curious cap. He is bony, swart, and meager, under this livery of poverty, yet it is life which his large hand sheds; he who has nothing pours upon the earth, with a superb gesture, the bread of the future. On the other side of the slope, a last ray of the sun shows a pair of oxen at the end of their furrow, strong and gentle companions of man, whose recompense will one day be the slaughter-house. This is the only light of the picture, which is bathed in shadow, and presents to the eye, under a cloudy sky, nothing but newly plowed earth. Of all the peasants sent to the *Salon* this year, we much prefer 'The Sower.' There is something great and of the grand style in this figure, with its violent gesture, its proud raggedness, which seems to be painted with the very earth that the sower is planting."

He was often obliged to go to Paris to sell his little canvases, and he would finish them sometimes in the studio of Diaz or at E. Lavieille's. "Peasants going to Work" was one of the most beautiful of these; it was bought by M. Collot, who ordered a Virgin for a sign-board for his shop. The latter was for many years on the corner of the Rue Nôtre-Dame-de-Lorette and the Rue Saint-Lazare, and was often repainted. It now belongs to M. Morel, who has had it cleaned.

It was at this time that Millet confided to me his divorce from mythology and naked female figures. He wrote from Barbizon:

Going to Work.

"I received yesterday colors, oil, canvas, and the sketch. These are the names of the pictures for the sale in question:

"1. Woman pounding hemp.

"2. Peasant man and woman going to work in the field.

"3. Pickers of wood in the forest.

"I don't know whether *pickers* can be printed. 'Peasant man and woman gathering Wood,' or anything you choose. * * * But, to tell the truth, the peasant subjects suit my temperament best; for I must confess, even if you think me a socialist, that the human side of art is what touches me most, and if I could only do what I like,—or, at least, attempt it,—I should do nothing that was not an impression from nature, either in landscape or figures. The gay side never shows itself to me. I don't know where it is. I have never seen it. The gayest thing I know is the calm, the silence, which is so sweet, either in the forest or in the cultivated land—whether the land be good for culture or not. You will admit that it is always very dreamy, and a sad dream, though often very delicious.

"You are sitting under a tree, enjoying all the comfort and quiet of which you are capable; you see come from a narrow path a poor creature loaded with fagots. The unexpected and always surprising way in which this figure strikes you, instantly reminds you of the common and melancholy lot of humanity—weariness. It is always like the impression of La Fontaine's 'Wood-cutter,' in the fable:

> "'What pleasure has he had since the day of his birth?
> Who so poor as he in the whole wide earth?'

"Sometimes, in places where the land is sterile, you see figures hoeing and digging. From time to time one raises himself and straightens his back, as they call it, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand. 'Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow.' Is this the gay, jovial work some people would have us believe in? But, nevertheless, to me it is true humanity and great poetry!

"But I stop, lest I should end by tiring you. Forgive me; I am all alone, with no one to whom I can speak of my impressions, and I let myself go without thinking. I will not do so again. Oh, now I think of it, send me

from time to time some fine letters with the Minister's seal,—a red seal and all the prettiness possible. If you could only see the respect with which the postman gives them to me, hat in hand (a thing quite out of the common), saying, with the greatest unctuousness, 'From the Minister!' It gives me a position, it increases my credit, for to them a letter with the Minister's seal is, of course, from the Minister. * * * Is there any chance of an order? Is that one of Jacque's getting on at all?

"I shake your hand. J.-F. MILLET.

"Do Rousseau's pictures make a good effect? Are they a success?"

This precious letter shows at once the programme and the character of Millet. His rustic art is at last proclaimed, as well as his philosophy, or rather his æsthetic theories. He opens a corner of his heart and shows us what he loves. A gay, even comic note, ends his letter: for he does not want to be thought a complainer, and, like all dreamy and impressible spirits, soon quits the melancholy tone to laugh a little at the foibles of humanity.

We can not mention all the pictures of this kind, but we remember several touching scenes: one the "Young Women Sewing," an interior full of the calm and seriousness of family life. "They are not seamstresses," he said; "they are the women of the house doing the work of the house." This picture brought Millet an order from the Minister of the Interior. The four seasons were also charming compositions, afterward enlarged. Here was the first thought of "The Gleaners," which stood for autumn. Spring was represented by the culture of the vine,—two men are binding the vine-branches to the poles, while on a hill near a woman is tending her cows. The atmosphere is full of wintry vapor, softening the rays of a setting sun. The execution is as delicate as Ostade's. "The

Man Spreading Manure" is also of this time. Millet took great pains with this composition, in which the solemn landscape is already chilled by the first frosts of November.

Though fixed in a country which he liked, Millet still turned his eyes toward his home, where were his aged mothers, weakened by age, illnesses, and anxieties. The grandmother, the spiritual head of the family, declined visibly; she could no longer write to her François anything but lamentation and religious exhortation. Wheat was dear, and beggars and vagabonds made their charity a heavy burden. They could not sleep for thinking that their dear François suffered, too, in these times of trouble.

Millet's grandmother, Louise Jumelin, died in the beginning of 1851, without having embraced her "Benjamin," her François, who had grown up under her wing, and whom she thought of until her last breath. Her grandchild was overwhelmed with sorrow. Millet did not speak for days, and his mute grief was pitiful to see. The tears which he was trying to repress would spring at a word, and he could only sob, "Oh, why could I not have seen her once more!"

He thought now of his mother. Alas! her existence was painful enough. Ill, with all the responsibility of the management of the farm, the fever for Paris seizing her children one by one, she felt as if everything were giving way beneath her. The patrimony was all going piecemeal, and there was no future for her children. Loneliness crept upon her; her daughters were marrying, her sons were leaving the village.

"My dear child," she wrote, "you say you are very anxious to come to see us and stay a little while with us. I am very anxious, too, but it seems

you have not much means. How do you manage to live? My poor child, when I begin to think of this I am very uncomfortable. Ah, I hope you will come and surprise us some time when we expect it the least. For myself, I can neither live nor die, I am so anxious to see you. I have neglected writing to you because I thought to see you during the summer, but now it is past, and indeed we are very anxious to see you. I have nothing now left me but to suffer and die. My poor child, if you could only come before the winter! I have such a great desire to see you one single time more. I think of you oftener than you imagine. I am tired of suffering in body and soul. When I wonder how you will get on in the future without money, I can neither rest nor sleep.

"Tell us how you do, whether you have work and make money, and sell your pictures. It is surprising that you don't speak of the revolutions in Paris. Is it true that there are any? Tell us something about them. I am so afraid that you will get caught in all this business. Will you come soon? Ah, if I had wings to fly to you! As soon as you get this letter, write again. I end by kissing you with all my heart, and I am with all possible love your mother, WIDOW MILLET."

It is not surprising that the son combined the religious ardor of the grandmother with the tenderness of the mother.

She did not last much longer. A suffocating asthma made her as weak as an octogenarian. Life remained in her only in the thought of her children,—the hope of seeing her François, who had always given her respect and affection. She waited like the mothers in the old legends,—listening for his footfall, hoping vainly for a surprise which never came. Poor François, too, waited; poverty, the fatal companion of his life, did not give him a moment's grace.

She waited two years, until 1853, and died in prayer and hope. Her son, a hundred leagues off, traced on paper the sorrows of his

The Old Wood-cutter.

mother. He thought of Tobit and his wife, who also waited, and he sketched a scene in which two old people look toward the sky, and try to find a human form amid the glories of the setting sun. The "Waiting," a picture exhibited some years later, was here begun.

VI.

Americans in Barbizon — Hard Times — Two Visits to Normandy.

IS art a natural language which all can understand? Is a particular education and aptitude necessary to appreciate its beauties? The common man, and even certain really poetic intelligences, do they rebel against the thoughts of painters and sculptors? We leave to others the work of answering these questions. Certainly our modern geniuses have not shown an understanding of plastic art, and, among the shepherds of men, many seem to us blind in this matter. The state, the natural protector of art, long went astray, both in its public manifestations, and in the choice of its acquisitions or orders. "And yet," said Millet, "it seems to me that the Pharaohs did not let the genius of ancient Egypt die, and that Pericles was lucky in the choice of a builder of the Parthenon; Alexander did not make humiliating demands upon Praxiteles; the Antonines allowed art, in their day, to attain to the greatest beauty. But in our day it is nothing but an accessory, a pleasing talent; whereas, of old, and in the Middle Ages, it was a pillar of society, its conscience, and the expression of its religious sentiment.

"What have the great men of our day done for the arts? Less than nothing. Lamartine (I saw him choose his favorite picture in the *Salon* of 1848) cared only for a subject which related to his political or literary preoccupations. He would never have found a place in his house for a picture by Rembrandt. Victor Hugo puts Louis Boulanger and Delacroix on the same line. Georges Sand has a woman's prudence, and gets out of the difficulty by beautiful words. Alexandre Dumas is in the hands of Delacroix, but he can not think freely outside of the painter of Shakspere and Goethe. I have never discovered a single well-felt page in Balzac, Eugène Sue, Frédéric Soulié, Barbier, Méry, etc.,—one page which could guide us or show a real comprehension of art; and that is the reason I was cold in meeting Prudhon when he came to see Diaz."

In 1850, or '51, Millet had been in a dark corner of Diaz's studio, when Prudhon came in. Millet turned a moment to look at the newcomer, and immediately began to work again at his picture.

In the *Salon* of 1853, Millet exhibited "Ruth and Boaz," "The Sheep-shearer," and "The Shepherd," all highly praised by Gautier, Paul de Saint Victor, and Pelloquet. Millet received a second-class medal. His "Ruth and Boaz" was bought by an American, and his two other pictures were purchased by Mr. William Morris Hunt. The latter had lived for several years in Paris. A pupil of Couture, he had become seriously enamored of Millet's works, and, to study quietly the man and the painter, made himself a comfortable home in Barbizon, and led the gay life of every American who lives in the good land of France. Other strangers, such as Mr. Hearn, painter, and Mr. Babcock, to whom Millet had given some lessons in 1848,

came to visit Mr. Hunt.* There was thus formed a sort of colony of artists, fervent disciples of Millet, who, by their purchases, lightened his poverty. But these windfalls could scarcely fill the holes made by a life which had always been hard. Like Rousseau, Millet had around him a group of tradesmen, anxious and almost fierce, whom he had to appease. A baker, the only one in the place, threatened with oaths to withdraw the daily bread. A grocer had become his bailiff. A country tailor—the antipodes of the patient Parisian tradesman—sent the sheriff's officer to sell the furniture in his studio, and he would not allow the artist a day's, or even an hour's, grace. Such scenes were repeated over and over during many years.

When I re-read the letters of Millet, written in these unfortunate times, I find them always containing a dignified, calm statement of his sufferings. He hides nothing, complains of nothing, merely tells the bald fact, which is thus still the more touching. All these cruel confidences end with these words: "Try, my dear Sensier, to coin some money with my pictures; sell them at any price, but send me one hundred francs, fifty, or even thirty, for the time approaches. * * *" Then I trotted all over Paris, offering dealers and amateurs the paintings of my friend. Some grinned, or sent me off as a madman; others, more rarely, bought, but at laughable prices. I went to my comrades. I told them they could buy with confidence, and that I would take the picture back if, later, they came to the conclusion that they had made a bad bargain. In this way I made some sales, and, after a month or two, back would come the painting, with

* [Among the other American artists who knew Millet at Barbizon were Wyatt Eaton, Edward Wheelwright, and Will H. Low.—TRANS.]

The New-born.

the words, "Decidedly, I don't care for this artist; I like anything else better"—a new embarrassment for me. I honored my promises, but only by superhuman efforts, loans, combinations. Thus I acquired many pictures of Millet in spite of myself, as it were, and by the mere force of circumstances. Later, some of these stubborn amateurs came to me for the same pictures, but I refused, saying: "It is too late; your pictures are in my harem, and I will just let you see them, like Candaules and Gyges. But the mold is not broken. Go to Millet; he will serve you." That was a time of trials, struggles, and humiliating, picturesque inventions to get us out of difficulties. I see it all through a mist, which changes sometimes into splendid rainbows, for I was as convinced as of a mathematical fact that Millet was a great painter.

I do not speak of the man. I was attached to Millet as to an elder brother, who revealed to me all the beauties and attractions of life,—a sage whose temper was ever even, whose welcome was always kind, and who taught me to rid myself of superfluities, and showed me the true paths of life. These times are gone. Millet is dead,—glorious, but killed before his time by the incessant battles in which his strength could not but fail. "In art," he used to say, "you have to 'give your skin.'" In spite of everything, Millet did not despair. He felt that he had a great career, if he only could get bread enough to hold out.

Rousseau at this time was scarcely more favored. Their intimacy was very slow to form. Millet, more straightened than he, only let him know, in a joking way, part of his troubles. Rousseau, defiant, always on his guard, only later opened his heart to Millet; but

at last they began to believe in each other, and they then commenced an exchange of impressions and ideas which had a great influence on Rousseau. Toward 1852, the latter used to consult his friend on the subject of his pictures and his projects. Millet sometimes dared to tell him point-blank his opinions — a difficult thing for Rousseau to accept. They even had some notions about working together.

The death of his mother made it absolutely necessary for him to go home and attend to the division of the inheritance. He was fortunate enough to sell some canvases, and left Barbizon the first days of May. Meeting at Gruchy, the eight children of Jean-Louis-Nicolas Millet divided his inheritance. François only asked for the books that had belonged to his great-uncle, and the great wardrobe of oak, which from father to son had come down uninjured. He left his part of the house and the land to be enjoyed by one of his brothers, who lived at Gruchy. And so, the family wealth being reduced to the smallest fractions, Millet started again for Barbizon, impatient to rejoin his wife and children.

Times became a trifle better. Some amateurs liked his drawings, and were never tired of increasing their collections. These drawings had not yet reached the beauty of those of a later date retouched with pastel, nor of those other admirable compositions which were seen after his death; but the artist then, as always, saw the fundamental characteristic of all country scenes, and rendered them in a style of his own and with a striking individuality Most of these drawings are on gray or blue paper, with the lights touched in with Chinese white, and the shadows in stump, and are swiftly done, as by a man master of his subject. They are almost all the first thought

of a composition, and if later they became pastel or painting, the disposition and effect were not changed. The image was instantly fixed in the mental vision of Millet, for he did nothing that was not deliberate, thoughtful, sought out, and when the picture came, it was complete and definite in a few strokes. But it distressed Millet to be reduced to work which fatigued his brain by constant invention. At this moment good luck arrived in the shape of a buyer, who was welcomed as a savior.

Perhaps it may seem that I unveil too much of the secret corner of Millet's life,—of his poverty. But of such a man everything is of value, and to see him always dignified and serene amid the storms of life, meeting his fate by work, calm love of his art, and such persistent self-abnegation, it will be admitted that his poverty ought to raise him in our esteem.

The new buyer was not a casual passer-by. Rousseau had discovered him, and, as usual, had sent him to Millet. M. Letrône did not stop; he ordered two more pictures, among others the beautiful composition of the woman feeding chickens, whose price was the enormous one of two thousand francs. Millet worth two thousand francs! and how would he use this treasure? To make his house comfortable and enjoy his wealth? Not at all. He thinks of home, and goes off, in June, 1854, with all his children, to La Hague. He went for one month and staid four.

At Gréville, he found neither his father nor his two mothers. Only his eldest sister and one of his brothers remained in the village —a new generation. The old friends of his childhood were under the grass of the cemetery. The first days were sad enough, but the fields,

the active life of the house, and the pure air from the cliffs, restored his tone. He drew, with a son's affection, everything which the family had owned: the house, the garden, the cider-mill, the stables, the orchard, the hedges, the pastures, and covered ways of the ancestral house. These sketches and notes, taken in all the neighborhood around, served him later for his compositions.

One evening he was returning to Gruchy, the "Angelus" was just ringing, and he found himself at the door of the little church of Eculleville. He went in; at the altar an old man was praying. He waited, and when the old priest rose, he struck him gently on the shoulder, and said: "François." It was the Abbé Jean Lebrisseux, his first teacher.

"Ah, is it you, dear child, little François?" and they embraced, weeping.

"And the Bible, François, have you forgotten it? and the Psalms, do you ever read them?"

"They are my breviary," said Millet. "I get from them all that I do."

"These are rare words to hear nowadays, but you will be rewarded. You used to love Virgil."

"I love him still."

"It is well. I am content. Where I sowed, good grain has grown, and you will reap the harvest, my son."

At night-fall they separated. Millet started again for Paris, where new work and new disappointments awaited him, but his stay at Gruchy was profitable to his future. He never exhausted the stock of characteristic subjects which he brought back with him. His

The Reaper.

name began to grow. The new rustic art of Millet had made the young men think; at once literal and imaginative, it roused in some minds a whole world of political and social problems. Some called him the brother of Pierre Dupont, the singer of peasants, and the eloquent ally of Lachambeaudie, the novelist of the sorrows of the people. "The Sower" cursed the rich, they said, because he flung his grain with anger toward the sky. Every one talked of the artist's work, and tried to make it a weapon. But Millet did not consider himself so important or so revolutionary. No subversive idea troubled his brain. Socialistic doctrines he would not listen to; the little that came to his ears, he said, was not clear. He often said: "My programme is work. 'Thou shalt gain thy bread in the sweat of thy brow' was written centuries ago. Immutable destiny, which none may change! What every one ought to do is to find progress in his profession, to try ever to do better, to be strong and clever in his trade, and be greater than his neighbor in talent and conscientiousness in his work. That for me is the only path. The rest is dream or calculation."

VII.

The Universal Exhibition of 1855 — The Invisible American — Millet's Anxieties — His Artistic Progress — "The Gleaners."

IN the Universal Exhibition of 1855, our artists were the most praised. Delacroix, declared to be the master of French masters, was here triumphant, and Théodore Rousseau, for the first time in his life, found nothing but admirers. All his pictures, refused for the last twenty years, came back like victorious exiles, and showed themselves in this cosmopolitan *Salon*. The reaction had come, against the injustice of the Institute toward the school of 1830. It became an enthusiasm. It went, perhaps, too far, and Rousseau, fearful of the future, dreaded the recoil of a movement too intense to endure.

Millet had long prepared and studied a subject inspired by Virgil, his favorite poet. It was a simple scene — a peasant grafting a tree in his garden, near his wife and child. Himself a man with a family, he thought of the future of his children, of the father who works for his successors. His picture was understood. Théophile Gautier did him the honor of a description :

"We begin our review of the country scenes by the picture of M. J.-F. Millet, 'A Peasant Grafting a Tree.' Very different from the ugly mannerists who, under the plea of realism, substitute hideousness for truth, M. Millet seeks and finds style in the representation of types and scenes of country life. His 'Sower,' exhibited some years ago, had a rare grandeur and elevation, though its rusticity was not in the least softened; but the gesture with which the poor workman threw the sacred wheat into the furrow was so beautiful, that Triptolemus guided by Ceres, on some Greek bass-relief, could not have had more majesty. An old felt hat, all rusty and faded, earth-stained rags, a coarse linen shirt, were his costume. The color was subdued — austere even to melancholy; the execution solid, thick, almost heavy, without any brilliancy of touch. Yet this picture made the same impression as the beginning of the 'Mare au Diable' of Georges Sand — a profound and solemn melancholy. The 'Peasant Grafting a Tree' is a composition of extreme simplicity, which does not draw the eye, but holds it long, once the attention is turned to it. * * * The man seems to accomplish some mystic ceremony, and to be the obscure priest of a divinity of the country; his serious profile, with strong, pure lines, does not lack a sort of melancholy grace, though retaining entirely the peasant character; a dull color, kept purposely low, wraps the scene and the figures like a thick rustic stuff. How strange is art! These two quiet figures on a gray ground, performing an ordinary work, occupy your mind and make you dream, while the most ingenious thoughts carefully rendered leave you as cold as ice. It is because M. Millet understands the hidden poetry of the fields; he loves the peasants whom he paints, and in their resigned faces expresses his sympathy with them; sowing, reaping, grafting, are to him holy acts having their own beauty and nobility. Why should not the peasant have a style, like the hero? Doubtless M. Millet has said this to himself, and he paints Georgics in which, under a heavy form and a somber color, glows a melancholy recollection of Virgil. * * *"

The "Peasant Grafting" had therefore its admirers, and Rousseau was not the least. He found an American who bought it for four thousand francs cash; the American remained invisible, but paid in

good gold through the hands of Rousseau. This generous stranger wished to remain unknown. Some weeks later we discovered the fabulous American to be no other than Théodore Rousseau, who wanted to hide his good deed. Already the year before he had bought from Millet the "Peasant Spreading Manure,"—a fine picture, in which the man stands out against a wide autumn landscape.

The year 1855 was a lucky one to Millet. He diminished his debts, and could devote himself to some pictures which he had already thought of. But this sort of ease could not last. Millet had heavy burdens, and a family increased by two brothers, who had left their homes and come to him for home and protection in the vocation of artist, which they wished, like him, to follow. Millet was a long time their teacher and their support. But until the end of 1855 he got along pretty well. Millet loved to see at his table all his little children, his friends, and those who cared for his art. It was a numerous gathering, and always gay. Rousseau, Diaz, Barye, Campredon, etc., enjoyed visiting there, and Millet, whom we have often found sad in his letters, had a really delightful gayety. His good humor became wit; his paradoxes, his raillery, were full of biting points. When others talked, he would draw for hours with the point of his knife, on the table-cloth, forms that were in his mind or before his eyes. He never stopped his production; in the studio he painted,—outside, he thought or took notes. When with his friends he drew, mechanically, the commonest things; if a question came up of perspective, form, drawing, he figured it out and solved the problem. How happy he was returning to Barbizon from Paris, his pockets full of toys and cakes for the children! How different from those dismal evenings

The Spaders.

when he returned with empty hands, and had for answer to the impatient voices that asked at the door-sill whether he had something beautiful from Paris: "Ah, my poor dears, I went too late—the shop was shut." All would go in, saddened, and Millet had for their consolation nothing but stories and songs. Unfortunately, the days without clouds and creditors soon passed, and the first day of the year 1856 brought melancholy New Year's presents to him. This year and the following can be put down as a time of famine and extreme trial.

"BARBIZON, January 1st, 1856.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: The hour of breaking-down has come, decidedly. I have just found a summons to pay within twenty-four hours to M. X., tailor, the sum of 607 fr. 60 c. He is a vampire, as he promised to take a note till March. On the other hand, G. refused bread and was disgustingly rude. It has come! A whole procession of creditors will file through the house; it will be very lively.

"I have just seen the bailiff, and told him in my ignorance that credit was a usual and well-known thing. Does not the law allow an arrangement? A tradesman can catch you in a trap by offering you a year's credit, and at the end of six months bring you a bill and force you to pay! Yes, the law knows nothing of these things—you must pay! This explains to me my want of aptitude at business, for as far as I can see you must put aside all clear reasoning and all good sense to learn chicanery, which is nothing better than subtle cheating. Since the law has the right to collar me, pray tell me what they will do to me, for I can not admit its right to violence except on refusal of payment. I thought it was the business of the law to court conciliation. Tell me, for I have a hard head, how far people can go who want to proceed to the uttermost and whose conscience never troubles them, for one might revolt against what is legal and say, 'That is wrong—odious.' I want you to tell me just what they can do. Rousseau, to whom I told the story of the bailiff, is furious.

"Write immediately. I shake hands. J.-F. MILLET."

I only give this letter as a specimen of the melancholy position of Millet, and of his anxieties. I have under my eyes monthly, weekly, sometimes daily letters, forming a sort of inventory of his tortures, but I abstain from publishing this painful correspondence.

When he suffered too much, he would call for help. Then his friends would lay down every other occupation, and without comment or explanation, concert together and endeavor to save him and give him peace.

Should I be silent, and leave these witnesses to his pain in obscurity? Should his life with its sufferings be hidden? Who, after his wife and children are gone, and I have rejoined him myself,—who will read these five hundred letters, the journal of a man of genius? I had almost forgotten these evil times; I remembered only that I once fought for a noble and brave soul. Other misfortunes had swallowed up their memory.

These letters I find eloquent, religious, loyal. Have I the right to suppress them? It would be cruel to publish them all in the present generation. I will only give extracts to show that I keep even inside of the facts; if I reproduced the whole of the correspondence, it would read like the story of starving people in a desert. A few fragments will suffice:

"Ah! the end of the month—where shall I find the money for it? For the children must eat."

"My heart is all black."

"If you knew how dark the future, even the near future, looks! At least, let me work to the end."

"I have a series of headaches which interrupt my work very often. I am very much behindhand. Suppose I can't get done for the end of the month!"

He constantly expects to sell, has promises, is disappointed, or payment is retarded. He writes to Rousseau, who, on his part, found only indifference for, or lack of interest in, the beautiful drawings of Millet:

"How I bore you, my poor Rousseau! You are a good proof that those whose hearts are kind live the life of victims. Do not think that I am unmindful of all the trouble that I put you to, but I can't help bothering you. I seem to be under a sort of spell — Ah! I must stop. I can not and I dare not say what I think on this subject.

"I am working like a slave to get my picture done ['The Gleaners']. I am sure I don't know what will come of all the pains that I give myself. Some days I think this wretched picture has no sense. At any rate, I must have a month of quiet work on it. If only it is not too disgraceful! Headaches, big and little, have besieged me this month to such an extent that I have had scarcely a quarter of an hour of my painting-time. Physically and morally I am going down-hill. You are right. Life is a sad thing, and few spots in it are places of refuge. We come to understand those who sighed for a place of refreshment, of light, and of peace. One understands what Dante makes some of his people say, speaking of the time that they passed on earth — '*the time of my debt.*' — Well, let us hold out as long as we can."

Finally, like a last cry, he wrote these words alone: "Come! Come!"

Amidst these miseries, his head always ill, and disquiet and fear ever following him, Millet painted his most beautiful works: "The Gleaners," "The Angelus," and "Waiting." As soon as his health came back, he felt a returning interest in his peasant life.

"I am decidedly better; I have begun to work again. My projects of buying a house are for the time in abeyance. I do not want to go into an affair from which I would not know how to get out, all the more that, even if

I put myself to so much inconvenience, I do not find anything exactly to my mind. I will wait. Pierre, my youngest brother, has come to Barbizon. Hunt has been here several days. Will Rousseau come? J.-F. MILLET."

The year 1856, an infernal year, did not seem to affect Millet. The more he suffered the more he withdrew into solitude to bring forth great things. He was very much interested in a type of which Barbizon gave him the best examples,—the shepherd,—and painted several. The shepherd is not a countryman after the pattern of the laborers and other field-hands; he is an enigma, a mystery; he lives alone, his only companions his dog and his flock. From Easter to Martinmas he sleeps in the open air, in a movable hut, which makes him a nightly guardian of his flock. In winter he goes over the wet ground to find the slightest spear of vegetation. In spring he helps the ewes in the bringing forth of their young, and cares for them. He is the guardian, the guide, the physician of the flock. Besides, he is a man of contemplation. He knows the stars, watches the sky, and predicts the weather. The whole life of the atmosphere is familiar to him. This solitary being greatly interested Millet. One picture, painted in 1856, a shepherd bringing home his flock at sunset, has a Homeric simplicity and beauty. Another, near a rock in the shadow of a wood, looks out on the world of sunlight, where two men labor wearily, and seems almost glad of the misery of others. Another watches the horizon and the little cloud in the east. Of a picture of a shepherd in the fold, at night, a weird moonlight effect, he said:

"Oh, how I wish I could make those who see my work feel the splendors and terrors of the night! One ought to be able to make people

The Gleaners.

hear the songs, the silences and murmurings of the air. They should feel the infinite. Is there not something terrible in thinking of these lights which rise and disappear, century after century, without varying? They light both the joys and sorrows of men, and when our world goes to pieces, the beneficent sun will watch without pity the universal desolation."

Once we heard the details of a dreadful murder which had been committed in the forest.

"Horror!" cried Millet. "And he [the sun] did not stop in dismay, did not turn backward upon his course! These stars are implacable."

The end of this hard year everything seemed to fail; his few patrons were absorbed by the sale of the works of Campredon, who had just died. Something had to be done, and I went to some of my richest friends, asking them to subscribe to a work of charity. No one asked me its destination. I got together a hundred francs.

"SUNDAY EVENING, 7th December, 1856.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: I have received the hundred francs, and I thank you ten times over. * * * Rousseau will write to you about my pictures at the Campredon sale. * * * If I have not the spleen, which you tell me not to take to myself as bosom companion, I have a settled weariness, but no anger against any one, or anything, for I do not think myself any more a victim than lots of other people; but I am afraid of getting tired out. It has lasted nearly twenty years. Well, it has not been the fault of my friends that it has not been different; that is a consolation to me."

Rousseau would have come to his assistance had he not been himself very much embarrassed; but the Barbizon people were willing to give credit to M. Rousseau, who knew how to manage a creditor. He worked hard for Millet at the sale.

I do not know what Millet himself thought of his immense progress. Doubtless he must have seen that the time had come when, confident in his powers, he could express his thought with lucidity and strength. But he said nothing; and lonely in his own studio he mused on, telling little to his friends. He was sad and absorbed. His letters were few, but affectionate and full of tender melancholy. His affairs were in a bad state, and there seemed no chance of their bettering; the public of Paris was hostile, and, except by a few art-lovers and exceptional merchants, he was considered the painter of the ugly, and the libeler of the country. Yet he did not alter the character of rusticity which he wished to carry to its extreme limit.

"I risk all," said he, with a shrug. "I have ventured my neck, and I am not going to give up now."

"Let no one think," he added, "that they can force me to *prettify* my types; I would rather do nothing than express myself feebly. Give me sign-boards to paint; give me yards of canvas to cover by the day, like a house-painter,—but let me imagine and execute my own work in my own way."

On this subject he was immovable.

"Yet, one sees handsome peasants, pretty country girls."

"Yes, yes; but their beauty is not in their faces; it is in the expression of their figures and their appropriate action. Your pretty peasant girls do not do well for picking up wood, gleaning in the August sun, drawing water from a well. If I am to paint a mother, I shall try to make her beautiful simply by her look at her child. Beauty is expression."

The glory of our time, the invention of 1830, every one knows now, is the splendor of modern landscape. Théodore Rousseau and Jules Dupré were the pioneers. They understood that the depth and perspective of the sky, the natural colors, the exact truth, had a right to exist in art. It was the revelation of a new world. And obeying this thought, they neglected, without knowing it, the presence of man. Their works were bold enough to absorb their strength, and full enough of passion to move public opinion.

Millet wished to give to man the principal *rôle*, and yet give to landscape the importance, the grandeur and truth of a creation within his creation. Until now, Millet has half feared his task. The landscape which surrounds his figures is secondary, and sometimes heavy. Except in "The Sower" and some little canvases, Millet retained the old tradition, the sacrifice of the landscape to the figure.

Now all changes. Millet has found the key. From this time on, his figures, as principal subjects, will be luminous against a luminous sky, melt, and yet be accented in the same atmosphere, without artifice of effect or help of accident.

To whom did he owe this discovery? To his own profound knowledge of outdoor life. He knew so thoroughly the laws of perspective and the play of light, that his figures melted like other accessories into a universal harmony. His knowledge was so exact of how to paint a scene, in the place and with the movement familiar to him, that his exactitude became a charm. He painted the air, he fixed the light, he saw the invisible. But for that he required the best drawing, the balanced proportion of the diverse movements

of the human figure, and all the aid of long-meditated knowledge. This knowledge he had acquired at the price of immense study. But, what none could teach, he had by virtue of his genius—gesture, attitude, movement in the greatest truthfulness, expression at its highest point. His aim was admirable yet dangerous. One step beyond, and the artist would have fallen into over-characterization. Millet, a man of emotion, yet also of judgment, kept his imagination in hand; and if he was not entirely satisfied with his ideal conception, he left it for months and years until it became worthy of him. But he had such a horror of weakening the type of his peasants that sometimes he went too far—though this was rare.

At the *Salon* of 1857, Millet had a picture which gave him a distinct position before the public, namely: "The Gleaners." The artists—those who had insight—were surprised at a picture finer than anything he had yet done, and admired it without reserve. They saw it had knowledge, a fine style, atmosphere, and modeling. But the critics divided into two camps. Some wished to find in it a plea against the misery of the people; others declared that these three poor women were savage beasts threatening the social order. On the art question (the only one really at stake), the judges were not less divided.

It is true that Millet was a man of his time. Himself a peasant, and used to the hard toil of the fields, he always had in his heart compassion and pity for the miserable poor of the country. He was neither a socialist nor an idealist, but, like all deep thinkers, he loved humanity; he suffered with its woes, and longed to express them. For this, he only needed to paint the peasant at his work. In spite

of himself, and without knowing it, he entered into the heart of the question. But they wronged him in imputing to him a doctrine which was repulsive to his nature, and which his conscience reproved. The critics put upon him the stigma of a vanquished partisan to the end of his life. There was no use in his repeating that he was entirely resigned to the eternal destiny of man; that his art was only a desire to formulate his sensations, to tell again what life had taught him. Such simple conscientiousness was never believed.

"13th January, 1858.

"DEAR SENSIER: Here at last is the 'Wheat-Ear.'* Try to get Durand-Ruel to pay a little before the end of the month. Do it cleverly and promptly, but don't let him think me in great need. You understand. I tremble to see the approach of one of those moments you know so well. I may say, 'the hour is nigh!' J.-F. MILLET."

* "The Wheat-Ear" was a drawing which Millet sent to me for a lady who had asked for a "line from his own hand." When he was very much begged, he would send a drawing to me. For ladies it was always wheat-ears; for men whom he scarcely knew, it was a pair of *sabots*. He has sent me five or six for distant admirers. They were his coat of arms, as it were.

VIII.

"The Angelus"—"Death and the Wood-cutter"—Visits from Decamps—A Three Years' Contract.

SO Millet's life consumed itself away: work, illness, anxiety, creditors, and difficulty in getting paid even for the work he delivered. If he and I had not had youth, with its power of resistance, it would have ended tragically. Twice the idea of suicide haunted the mind of Millet.

"Suicide," he said, as if to himself, "is the act of a bad man—and then—wife, children, a fine inheritance," and Millet looked at me. Then, with a sudden impulse, he cried: "Come, let us go and see the sunset; it will make me feel better." *

Out in the fields, at the close of day, Millet said: "See those objects which move over there in the shadow, creeping or walking.

* This wretched thought came to him often, and I have seen several tragic sketches of suicides. One is very dramatic. A painter lies dead at the foot of his easel; a woman at the dreadful sight lifts her arms, and seems to cry out. But between the thought and the act was a whole world which Millet would never have crossed.

The Angelus.

They are the spirits of the plain,—in reality, poor human creatures—a woman bent under her load of grass, another who drags herself along exhausted beneath a fagot of wood. Far off they are grand,—they balance the load on their shoulders,—the sun obscures their outlines; it is beautiful—it is mysterious." So, every time that Millet touched the earth with his foot, he was strengthened and consoled:

"SUNDAY MORNING, April, 1858.

"* * * If only this drawing could produce an impression upon Monsieur H. also; but I do not count upon that. The men who dare admire things in advance of the rest of the world are not common. * * *

"Do not imagine that I do not like the picture of Corot, 'The Meadow with the Ditch.' Rousseau and I, on the contrary, think the two should go together, each one having its distinct value. You have good reason to be fond of it. What struck us particularly in the *other* was, that it has the air of having been made by one who did not know how to paint, and who did it as best he could—with a great desire to do it. The painting seems, in fact, to be an original discovery. They are two very beautiful things. We will talk about them; writing would be endless."

At last, he had two serious orders—an Immaculate Conception, for the private railway carriage of the Pope, and an order from the Minister. The Virgin was nothing but a very young country girl, gazing astonished at the child in her arms. It was full of a penetrating charm. We have never heard of it since it left the studio.

The order from the Minister had been given in 1852, by the Directors of the Beaux Arts. I determined on a campaign in his behalf, and addressed my request to M. Romieu. Millet was suspected of being a demagogue, in spite of all that could be said, and the artists called him an original, a pretentious savage; so there was no

result. Finally I took a little picture, the "Sewing-Women," and, hiding the name, asked M. Romieu's secretary to hang it in the Director's office, without mentioning the author. It was universally admired. But the triumph came when Paul Delaroche, coming in, saw it, and immediately praised the talent of the author. "A new man," said he; "find out his name." "A peasant named François Millet." "Millet,—my pupil! A strong man; head full of imagination, and a strong hand. Ah! I am not surprised." So the order was signed, and Millet had six hundred francs in advance, and must paint the picture; but he had constant headaches, and work was almost impossible.

In 1859, Millet finished his painting of "The Angelus." In this truly original picture, Millet wished to give an impression of music; he wanted the noises of the country, and even the church-bells, to be heard. "Truth of expression will do it," said he. This was one of his favorite pictures; in it he revived his childhood's sensations. As day dies, two peasants, a man and a woman, hear the Angelus; they rise, stop work, and, standing bareheaded, recite, with eyes cast down, the words "*Angelus domini nuntiavit Mariæ.*" The man, a true peasant of the plain, his head covered by a mass of short straight hair like a felt hat, prays silently; the woman is bent and full of devotion. Into it Millet put the whole strength of his color. When I saw it for the first time, it was almost finished; Millet said to me: "What do you think of it?"

"It is the Angelus!" I cried.

"It is, indeed. You can hear the bells." And he added: "I am contented; you understood it. It is all I ask. Then, my dear

fellow, you must try to sell this picture," he said, and he sent it to me in Paris. Arthur Stevens looked at it, came back twenty times to see it, was possessed by it. He offered it to speculators and picture-buyers. Two months passed in visits and bargaining. All his clients hesitated, until a man of taste, M. Van Praet, the Belgian Minister, ventured on his representation to buy "The Angelus." While Millet was finishing his "Death and the Wood-cutter," and "The Woman with a Cow," M. Letrône, who had bought four pictures five years before, sent them to auction, and let them go at prices which would now make us smile. It discouraged Millet about his future pictures. His embarrassments increased; he was driven to death, and, in January, 1859, he wrote:

"It is frightful to be stripped naked before such people, not so much for one's pride, which, of course, suffers, as because it is impossible to get what we need. We have wood for only one or two days, and we do not know how to get it, as they will not give it to us without money. Next month my wife will be confined, and I have nothing. I am suffering and sad. Forgive me for telling you these things. I do not pretend to be more unfortunate than a lot of other people, but each feels his own pain. If you can stir up a little those who can get me an order, I will thank you more than ever. I will only believe it when I see it. I am working on the drawings of Alfred Feydeau, whose money I beg you to send as soon as you get it, for the children cannot be without a fire. So much the worse for the end of the month! J.-F. MILLET."

The 20th of March brings the same difficulties and complaints. How to get him out of the bailiff's hands! Necessity is the mother of invention, and I discover an expedient. A few weeks of respite, and he finds that one of his pictures, "Death and the Wood-cutter,"

has been refused by the jury of the *Salon.* It was the one he had counted on, one of his most beautiful compositions, but the blow does not reach the heart. Millet has his own pride. He sees a deliberate design to hurt him in his means of livelihood, and he stiffens his back to bear injustice. He believes that a strong hand wishes to strike him down privately, and he braves those who take advantage of their strength and accidental power. "*Vidi praevaricantes,*" he wrote on the edge of a drawing, and that was all his vengeance. He said to me: "They wish to force me into their drawing-room art, to break my spirit. No, no. I was born a peasant, and a peasant I will die. I will say what I feel. I paint things as I see them, and I will hold my ground without retreating one *sabot;* and, if necessary, I will fight for honor." And he ended, laughing, "Sensier, let us save the honor of the convent!" The rejection of "Death and the Wood-cutter" made a great noise, for no one could believe Millet to be so devoid of talent as to merit such treatment. It looked like brute force. Protestations arose, and they were fierce. I will first give the words of Alexandre Dumas (Senior):

"Millet lives in the fields. He has them ever under his eye, and he renders them with great truth. Look well, and you will not find in his peasants that sickly stupidity which superficial critics or deliberate detractors choose to see, but the look of calm strength and suffering—of a being who does not realize his sufferings or their reason.

"The subjects, you say, are melancholy. Who knows if the artist does not tell a story with his brush, as we with our pens? Who knows if the artist does not write the memoirs of his own soul, and that he is not in despair himself at seeing these poor men work without any hope of calm, of repose, or of happiness? * * *"

The Sheep-shearers.

Even the "Gazette des Beaux Arts" is indignant. Two of its advance guard open fire — Paul Mantz and Edmond Hédouin. Mantz wrote and Hédouin engraved the picture. Millet writes, April 2d:

"I will make the drawings, as it seems to be the only present resource, and I will do them as well as I can and as much as possible from real life; but, as you say, one needs a little calm to think over one's idea until it has had time to concentrate in the mind, in order to give well its essential part. However, we will do the best we can. Try to get the other picture well hung."

He came a few days later to Paris, to see Hédouin, who began the etching of "Death and the Wood-cutter." He gave him some help and advice and left, after being assured that he should not be made a cause of anger or propaganda, and begging us to speak only of the refusal of the picture from the point of view of art, and to introduce no politics into the discussion. He returned to Barbizon when he was very ill, spat blood, and was in danger of death. All these violent emotions had their effect upon him, but his strong constitution helped him through.

"27 May, 1859.

"* * * If you knew the trouble I have with my eyes. Ah! when will He come who will say to me, as to the wretched cripple in the Bible, 'Arise and walk!'

J.-F Millet."

Decamps had been living several years at Fontainebleau. He was not at all sociable. One day Millet, while at work, heard a knock at the door of his studio; a gentleman with a large beard came in and said:

"I am Decamps, the painter, and I have come to see you as to see an old acquaintance."

Millet, surprised, answered only by a silent welcome.

"Your pictures please me very much. You go to work with freshness and without fatigue. Will you show me what you are doing?"

Millet showed him all he considered worthy of Decamps, who became silent, looking at him as an unhappy man looks at a happy one.

"Ah, that is good—painted as I should like to paint. You don't know what hard work it is to get rid of a bad education. I like to see painting young, vigorous, and healthy. Courbet often does some fine things, but the man lacks common sense. He will never paint a picture."

Decamps had come to see Millet almost on the sly. He had left his horse at the entrance of the village, and had gone through the gardens in order not to meet any one.

"I came to surprise you like a poacher," said he. "I don't want to see any artists. I came to see you alone."

He came back several times each year, always in this kind of half-incognito, until his death (in 1860), and always talked for hours with Millet of art and artists of his time. He would never go into Millet's house, and never asked him to come and see him at Fontainebleau. Millet considered him a very original and very clear mind in his judgments of the masters and contemporary art; but a restless man, doubtful of himself, who, under the rough outside of a cavalry officer, hid a profound weakness, straying into theories about

painting and the search for means rather than an end. Execution was his god. Said Millet: "I never heard him say one heart-felt word. He had cruel *bon-mots*, a crushing sarcasm, a very just criticism even about his own pictures. He suffered like a man who is always searching, and losing his way. On the whole, he had a superior mind in a suffering soul."

In spite of all his efforts, Arthur Stevens had not been able to find a buyer for either "The Wood-cutter" or "The Angelus," and months passed in abstinence. Rousseau and Diaz exerted themselves to the utmost. The waiting was long and cruel. At last—a memorable day—came Diaz, like the Cid. He had got six hundred francs, and he lent them to Millet. "A bad place got over," wrote Millet.

It was about this time, March, 1860, if I remember aright, that Millet signed a contract in which he pledged himself to give to M—— all the pictures and drawings which he could do in three years. He was to have a thousand francs a month. He could choose his own subject and size of canvas. The account was to be balanced at the expiration of the time fixed. Here we have Millet sure of twelve thousand francs a year,—and only one purchaser. It was a great relief, and it seemed to him that Peace herself came to dwell in his house. Released from care, free in his invention, he now painted those admirable canvases which will always be the most brilliant examples of his talent,—"The Sheep-shearer," "Woman Feeding her Children," "Shepherd in the Fold, by Moonlight," "Sheep-shearing," etc. Millet worked happily, as if an old dream were coming true. Perhaps it was imprudent to mortgage his

liberty, but his whole ambition had been merely to live by his labor, and he now had three years assured to him. He was now at liberty to undertake works of an importance, originality, and force that he could never have carried through if he had been left to himself. The year 1860 was a time of calm to him, free from little debts and the cares of the household; his frequent letters are entirely peaceful. "If it were not for my blessed headaches, I should be contented and quite happy." He re-read with pleasure Montaigne, Bernard Palissy, Olivier de Serres, and sent me extracts applicable to art. Our walks were gay; we laughed about "*bons bourgeois*," and their comments on pictures. There were moments in which Millet's words on the subject of nature were eloquent almost to inspiration. When I told him that they might be useful to us both, he would write them down hastily and send me the substance. Poussin was always his model. The character of the great Normandy painter, loyal even to severity; his pictures, all conceived with such exquisite reason; his letters, in which, perhaps alone of the old artists, he knew how to formulate principles of art,—made Millet love him as a tutelar genius.

All this work did not prevent him from suffering with the sufferings of his friends. One of his letters shows his feeling for any family trouble. We had lost a child.

"1st July.

"DEAR SENSIER: We are most distressed at the news from you, and we pity Mme. Sensier for all she is suffering. We hope for better news, I assure you. Beg her to try not to grieve so much. Your own experience is, in its way, very agonizing, and no one who has not experienced it can imagine anything of the kind. Alas! there is no consolation worth even attempting—

where should we look for it? We can only reflect on the sad state of man who is born of woman, whose short existence is but a tissue of misery. 'Why did I not die in the womb!' said Job. Dear Sensier, I must stop, for I am truly very dismal; but you can not imagine how, when I hear of a profound sorrow, especially one which strikes those whom I most love, it brings to my mind all that I myself have gone through, and presents all my troubles to me at once. Happily other things come to distract me, but I am easily turned again into that current of thought. My wife begs Mme. Sensier not to excite herself with grief. We both embrace you, and wish for you with our whole hearts that you should get over your sorrow. Courage!

"J.-F. MILLET.

"Ask M. Niel if he knows an old book, printed in French, called *Tableau des visions chrestiennes*—at least, this was the title at the head of the pages, for the volume I saw had neither title-page nor end. It was full of legends which used to frighten me when I was a child. It had the opinions of casuists about a lot of things to happen in the other world, etc. Is it a book easy to find? What are the finest old illustrated Bibles, and what, in his opinion, is the best translation? * * *"

Millet wrote to Thoré concerning three of his own pictures, then exhibited at Martinet's, and which were very much admired:

"In the 'Woman Going to Draw Water,' I tried to show that she was not a water-carrier, or even a servant, but a woman going to draw water for the house, for soup, for her husband and children; that she should not seem to be carrying any greater or less weight than the buckets full; that under the sort of grimace which the weight on her shoulders causes, and the closing of the eyes at the sunlight, one should see a kind of homely goodness. I have avoided (as I always do with horror) anything that can verge on the sentimental. I wanted her to do her work good-naturedly and simply, without thinking anything about it,—as if it were a part of her daily labor, the habit of her life. I wanted to show the coolness of the well, and meant that its antique form should suggest that many before her had come there to draw water.

"In the 'Woman Feeding her Children,' I wanted to suggest a nest of birds with their mother giving them food. The man [in the distance] works to feed them all.

"In the 'Sheep being Sheared,' I tried to express that sort of stupefaction which the sheep feel when they are just sheared, and the surprise of those not yet cut at seeing such denuded creatures coming among them. I tried to give to the house a look of rustic comfort, and make one imagine the yard behind it green where the poplars are planted to protect the house; in fact, I wished the whole thing to look like an old building full of associations.

"I try not to have things look as if chance had brought them together, but as if they had a necessary bond between them. I want the people I represent to look as if they belonged to their station, and as if their imaginations could not conceive of their ever being anything else. People and things should always be there with an object. I want to put strongly and completely all that is necessary, for I think things weakly said might as well not be said at all, for they are, as it were, deflowered and spoiled—but I profess the greatest horror for uselessness (however brilliant) and filling up. These things can only weaken a picture by distracting the attention toward secondary things.

"I don't know whether this is worth saying—but here it is. * * *

"The children's whooping-cough is a little better. How d'ye do from us all to you all. J.-F. MILLET."

Thoré wrote an article in the "Gazette des Beaux Arts" on the exhibition in Brussels, in which he said:

"Till now M. Millet has only shown us small figures, though his way of painting is appropriate to great compositions. The 'Woman Sheep-shearing' is life-size, seen three-quarters in profile. * * * This simple sheep-shearer makes us think of the great works of antiquity, and at the same time of the most solid painting and best color of the Venetian school. Greek art and Giorgione—these are the two memories evoked by the original painting of this solitary worker, who will soon be classed among the masters of our time, and who, perhaps, opens a new era in art."

His relative rest did not prevent him from occupying himself with the war waged about him in Paris. His keen instinct made him distinguish friends and foes. He was sure that a campaign was opening against him, in spite of Gérôme, who said, "He is a Jupiter in *sabots*," in spite of the best artists—Jules Dupré, Daubigny, Diaz, Delacroix, Barye, Alfred Stevens, Ricard, Daumier, Belly, Ziem, and Rousseau, and many others of the young school, who always stood up for him.* Méryon, who has had such success since with his etchings, had a great opinion of Millet's, and took the trouble to print some proofs in his own press, in order to study their qualities.

* We have purposely omitted Corot among the partisans of Millet. Corot had personally a great liking for him, but he never understood his talent. He saw very little of him, and was not a friend. I spoke to him once of Millet: "A good heart," said he, "but his pictures are to me a new world—I don't know where I am; I am too fond of the old. I see there is great knowledge, style, depth,—but it frightens me. I like my own little music better. And, to tell the truth, I find it very difficult to like new art. It is only lately, and after having been unsympathetic for a great while, that I at last understood Eugène Delacroix, whom I now think a great man."

IX.

The Salon of 1861—A Suicide in Barbizon—"Peasant Leaning on his Hoe"—Millet's Confession of Faith.

THE *Salon* of 1861 opened at the Champs Elysées, and Millet was represented by three pictures, "A Woman Feeding her Children," "Waiting," and "The Sheep-shearer," the large picture exhibited the year before at Brussels. I was there the opening day, and I remember that with certain artists it was an enthusiastic success. Several said to me: "Millet has surpassed himself; his 'Sheep-shearer' is great, strong art, such as is no longer painted. It is like the fresco of an old Florentine." A whole battalion of the young painters declared themselves, with the vehemence of youth, as admirers of Millet. A great part of the critics were hostile, and the public passed in silence to stop before the "Phryne" and "Augurs" of Gérôme, and the beautiful landscapes of Courbet.

"Waiting," a page of Millet's filial heart, was especially attacked on all sides, by caricatures, pitiless jokes, and the solemn dictum of high authorities. Yet the picture was beautiful, and spoke a language

all might understand,—the home of the old parents of Tobit—a real home of poor people, living in the solitude of the country, and the loneliness of their waiting; the sun, the wood, the road,—a painted silence. The two old people are drawn with the wonderful knowledge of Millet—a strong, marked execution.

It is a beautiful picture, and yet it displeased people. Millet made no answer to the attacks, except in some words to me:

"To tell the truth, I prefer the way in which M. X. has treated me to having him praise me. His long strings of empty words, his hollow praises, give me the sensation of having been made to eat pomade. I would rather be rid of him with a little venom. If I wore pumps, I might find it made the road rather heavy, but with *sabots* I think I can get out of the mire."

But all the critics did not follow this lead. Millet had defenders. Théodore Pelloquet wrote of "The Sheep-shearer":

"Here is great art, art that raises the mind. It is full of character, firmness, and grandeur; it reaches the highest style without apparent effort. One can not find the least trace of false tricks of painting; but instead a real strength, which does not try to display itself; a large way of painting, serious and solid; a drawing full of energy, easy and graceful, which we can only accuse of an affectation toward suppressing details—an excess, in fact, of austerity. * * *"

"If I were not firm in my own ideas," said Millet to me, "if I had not some friends,—if I were alone, in fact,—I should ask myself if I were not the dupe of my imagination, if I were not a dreamer. I ask you," he added, "what can I find good, or serious, for the correction of my faults, in the invectives of my critics? I look in vain for anything but noise; not one counsel which I could use. Is this the office of criticism—merely to abuse?"

I often ask myself if I am not painting the situation in too somber colors. To control myself, I have re-read the notes taken at the time, month by month, from papers and pamphlets,—notes of real events which took place long ago; and ready as I am to modify the melancholy account, I can only admit the facts. They are a report of a police-court, in which Millet always appears as the accused,—yes, as a criminal, guilty of exciting citizens one against another. Millet felt all the cruelty of these accusations; his look showed it. It can even be seen in one of his photographs. He had never succeeded in getting one that looked like him,—he was either stiffened by the pose, or had a hard, fixed look, which was always exaggerated. A little photograph, made by one of our friends at Barbizon, at last seized the true moment. He is standing, full length, in *sabots*, his back to a wall, and his head raised straight and proud; the leg a little forward, like a man who balances himself exactly; his hat is in his hand, his chest out, his hair thrown back, and his eyes as if fixed on some threatening object. He wears the gray jersey of the country, and might be one of those enthusiastic peasants, victims of our civil wars, who, vanquished, look at death without flinching. This picture is to me Millet's whole life; he was pleased when I said: "You look like a leader of peasants, who is about to be shot."

He was taciturn. People tried to know him because he was an eccentric; they tried to make him talk, and only succeeded in obtaining a few words of cold civility. He was confiding and talkative only with his friends; walking through the forest, which had the power of making him forget his enmities, he was often eloquent to a remarkable degree. He became enthusiastic over the majesty of

the woods, the crumbling of the antediluvian rocks. He had new and original thoughts. He saw man in the past, savage man, living happily under these great branches. Then, as the sun fell, he recalled the folk-legends, and his imagination took color from the fading day. He explained the terrors of the peasant with the clearness of a seer.

"Do you not hear the witches' Sabbath over there at the end of the Bas-Bréau,—the cries of strangling children, and the laugh of convicts? Yet it is nothing but the song of night birds, and the last cry of the crows. Everything frightens when night, the unknown, succeeds light. All legends have a source of truth, and if I had a forest to paint, I would not want to remind people of emeralds, topazes, a box of jewels; but of its greennesses and its darkness, which have such power upon the heart of man. See the breaking of those great rocks, thrown there by the strength of the elements; a prehistoric deluge! It must have been fearful, grinding in its jaws a generation of men, when the great waters were upon the face of the earth, and alone the Spirit of God survived the disaster. The Bible paints it in these words: '*Et Spiritus Dei superabat super aquas.*' Poussin alone, perhaps, understood this 'end of the world.'"

For three years Millet worked constantly, subject to the agreement of March, 1860. Though not free, he was fruitful. At the end of the contract, Millet owed his purchaser 5,762 francs, which he engaged to pay in paintings.

Though anxious for the future on account of his growing family, at least Millet had not the troubled life of Rousseau, whose house was often a hell. At home, Millet was father and master. And when at night, after the fatigues of the day's work, he saw around him his wife and children, all glad to come and talk to

him, and tell him the little tales of the village which he enjoyed so much, then he thought of nothing but his brood,—his frog-pond, as he used to call it.

The year 1862 is the date at which Millet felt himself ripe to accomplish his boldest ventures. After having proceeded with a certain amount of caution hitherto, he then showed to the world a series of unexpected works in a form that no master before him had used. In 1862, he painted "Winter" and "The Crows," "Sheep-feeding," "The Wool-carder," "The Stag," "The Birth of the Calf," "The Shepherdess," and the "Man Resting on the Hoe,"* which raised such a hue and cry with nervous critics. If the series of works made during this curious year were brought together, it would be said that their author must have elaborated them in the most quiet spirit. They all are the wholesome, robust offspring of Millet's genius. Yet peace had not come for him. He was destined never to have rest except in that "place of refreshment" which he foresaw as the end of all his struggles. In our letters of this time, it will not be surprising to see the name of Rousseau constantly recurring. The friendship which united them is well known, and also the energy which Rousseau displayed to help Millet, and make his talent accepted. Rousseau was a brave and convinced friend, and he had a great share in causing Millet's infrequent gleams of good fortune.

"BARBIZON, 31st Dec., 1861.

"DEAR ROUSSEAU: Our baby is almost well, but will do nothing but nurse and cry, which does not allow his mother a moment's rest. But our

* [A heavy hoe such as is used by the peasants.—TRANS.]

anxiety is over—that is a great thing. I am working tremendously at my "Planters," so you will probably see me arrive soon, and toss everything upside down at your studio. * * * We have had a morning of frost, of the most extraordinary beauty, which I wont describe. Vallardi writes, demanding his little picture, with loud cries. Tell him I will bring it to Paris, and to be calm. * * *"

The picture referred to is the "Potato-planters," one of his most beautiful works. A man and woman are seen on a wide plain, at the edge of which a village is lost in the luminous atmosphere; the man opens the ground, and the woman drops in the seed-potato. A large apple-tree shades a donkey and a child sleeping in the donkey's basket.

"4th March, 1862.

"We have been horrified at the death of Mme. J. It is dreadful the number of those who fall about us in these days. No matter how much we think ourselves prepared for the ills that flesh is heir to, we are always taken by surprise and disarmed when they come. * * * What weather! everything frozen stiff. I don't know whether anything will survive. Oh, *primavera* of the poets — *triste! triste!*"

"27th March.

"Verdier brought some thorns for you, some horn-beams, beeches, seedlings, beam-trees; also some little elms, all twisted, of the right kind. We will plant them when you come. They all have shining trunks, and look like healthy fellows. Laurel? I am not so modest as to dislike laurel. Bring all you wish; but, if the choice depends on you, let one, at least, be the kind that becomes a tree. I always think of one I knew all my life in the garden at home, which will always be to me the type of a laurel. The trunk was as thick as a man's body, the leaves rather dull than shiny, and their color a beautiful dark green; the kind of laurel of which to make wreaths for Apollo. * * *"

"12th May.

"I have just had three days of my famous headaches. I can't get over it. * * *"

"21st July.

"M. and Mme. X. came to spend the day, and were delighted with everything. My 'Man Leaning on the Hoe' he thought splendid! If he were the Government, he would gather them all together as a chapter of history. He wished once more that my lot had been cast in happier surroundings, where I could have received more pleasing impressions; but, as things stood, not a line should be modified, the more as these things *were worth doing*; and a great many more flattering things, which would fill a volume. * * *"

"3d August.

"We are anxious to see you installed here. The children are dying to see Mme. Sensier and her little girl. * * *"

We passed the holidays together in walks and readings. Millet wrote out for me some of his early impressions. On the 25th of October he fell ill with an inexplicable fever. He is in despair. "Always evil; when will the good come?" said he to me. The doctor orders him to stay in his room. "Life, life, how hard it is at times! and how we need our friends and that [pointing to heaven] to bear it."

November had always been a black month for Millet, the one in which all his misfortunes happened, and this year had in store for him a tragedy, which he shall tell in his own words. It is about a friend of Rousseau, who had been staying there.

"Barbizon, 18th Nov., 1862.

"The wretched Vallardi has killed himself! Yesterday, about eight, Louis Fouché came hastily into my studio, where I had that moment arrived, and said, trembling, that he had just gone into Vallardi's room at Rousseau's, to rub him as usual; he had called him as he always did, and Vallardi did not answer; then he put his head into the room, and saw him on his bed covered

with blood; he had not dared look any more, and had come to tell me. Imagine what a shock it was to me. I ran there instantly with Luniot, whom we met on the way, and we saw the unfortunate fellow drowned in blood and seeming quite dead.

"How and why had he killed himself? I looked around, and saw on the little table by his bed a pair of scissors covered with blood, with which he must have struck himself.

"The *maire* and the doctor from Chailly came quickly, and we opened his shirt to see where he had struck himself, and found seventeen blows in the region of the heart, besides many other around. It is impossible to describe the look of this wretched man, the way in which he had struggled on his bed, which was all disordered, the prints of his hands in blood on the sheets, on the pillow and everywhere, on the curtains of the bed, which he had seized, and which were torn and bloody. I will try to tell you. The *gendarmes* and the Procureur Impérial came, and Barbizon is completely upset. I wrote immediately to Rousseau, to whom it will be a severe shock. I am so troubled that I will stop. Vallardi killed himself Sunday night. He was not quite cold when we arrived. Yours,

"J.-F. MILLET."

"Nov. 20th, BARBIZON.

"I can not get over the frightful impression of death under such dreadful conditions. The wretched fellow did not suffer greatly; he was only unhappy because he had not enough income. He would not endure poverty. 'Poverty!'—why, he had not even seen it in the distance! Unmarried, alone, with a little fortune, Rousseau, and other friends besides in Paris! He never knew that fearful thing and all that comes with it. It was the fear of drudgery and suffering which distracted his mind; he must have been crazy, and therefore we signed a certificate to that effect. The curé exerted himself to the utmost, and obtained from the dean of Melun permission to use the service of the church, which had at first been refused. Our attestation did away with the difficulty.

"Imagine what would have become of poor Adèle [Rousseau's cousin], alone with this corpse, if, as might easily have happened, Tillot and I had been

absent. We hardly left the spot, and gave the orders we thought necessary. We protected the body. In fact, I think we were of use. I could never finish if I should tell you stories of those who were there and who came. The grotesque is mixed with everything, even with death. * * * He really died from fear of dying in poverty; his friends in Paris told us so.

"This horrible end is ever before me. Imagine his death-agony. It is easy now to follow the events. Not being able to sleep again that night, he determined to end the thing. He went into the dining-room and took Mme. Rousseau's scissors, and, standing beside his bed, he struck himself as often as his strength permitted; his power exhausted, he fell with his face against the night-table and his knees on the floor, as one could see from the bruises on the nose and knees. The blow overturned the candle, which fortunately went out in falling. Imagine the efforts of the unhappy wretch, feeling about, trying to get up, slipping in the blood, and with infinite difficulty hoisting himself on the bed! Fancy this terrible struggle in the dark. And if you could have seen how he had struggled on the bed. Indeed, he left fearful traces of his death. Could he have beheld, before killing himself, the hideous scene the dawn would lighten, I think he would have stopped short; it is a perfect miracle that the house did not burn down. The candle had fallen first against the sheets and then had rolled under the curtains, which it touched. And what an accident for Rousseau, for it would have been impossible that, if the fire had broken out, the studio, which is just above, should not have burned too. Think of Rousseau's canvases, sketches, drawings, all on fire—all he had finished and begun, destroyed on his return—a heap of ashes! I am bewildered. Do come Sunday if you can; I need to be cheered, for I have never experienced anything like this. How heavy is the atmosphere of suicide! I am surrounded by an endless nightmare. J.-F. MILLET."

For many days Vallardi's violent death, and the sight of blood and voluntary self-torture, were a horror from which Millet could not escape. At last, as if in a fever, he fixed the terrible vision in tangible shape. He drew the unhappy suicide on his death-bed. When I saw him, three days later, he showed me the object of which

his memory had kept a fearful remembrance—a picture of blood, rage, and despair; and everywhere the bloody hand-mark on the walls, and even on the window; horrible, but full of strength and truth.

"BARBIZON, 29th December, 1862.

"* * * We were present in spirit at the baptism of your little Jeanne, and we wish for her that she may renounce the devil and all his works in another way than by word, and that she may be a good girl. If that ceremony were gone through with in sincerity of heart, and not as a form, as is usual, it would be more touching and solemn.

"I saw M. M——, as you announced. Of course I knew nothing, but as I discovered his secret from some remarks, I recommend you to stop him from spoiling this inclosure, which is most beautiful, and which he proposes to improve and change. First, he wishes to plant pines and other evergreens in the little wood, because in winter he thinks bare trees dismal! * * *"

Millet had an antipathy to all embellishments of nature. This little corner afterward inspired one of his most beautiful pictures: "Spring." He was right, therefore, to dread its destruction or pretended beautifying. He went so far, in his passion for the liberty of nature, that he would not allow the wildest plants to be hindered in their capricious growths. If it had only depended upon him, he would have let the ivy and honeysuckle penetrate into the very heart of the house. An ivy trimmed or a clematis pruned gave him real pain.

We have hidden many details of this year of labor and emotions —many a confidence which we keep for our own hearts. We are silent over his most secret sufferings. We only wished to show him at home and let him paint his own portrait. We will return to his public life as an artist.

His struggles are by no means finished. The *Salon!* Here we always find Millet torn between the indifference or the stupid surprise of the public, the fury or sympathy of the critics. He had little taste for the official exhibition—a big counter at which all is seen, judged, and sold with the alacrity of a stall in the fish-market; where many a critic shamelessly praises or blames without any other object than to say something clever or funny.

But none the less was it for Millet a torture-chamber. He found his pictures out of their element, and lost in a world which did not speak the same language. The new painting only raised a feeling of curiosity in him, and he said to a friend: "I wish I could make artists paint with more meditation, and critics write with less self-sufficiency. I would like the *Salon* closed for five years, and at the end of that time each artist be allowed only to send one nude figure, which should have no meaning. You would then see how many clever fellows would withdraw from competition, and how much want of knowledge is our modern disease."

Understanding well enough what was before him, Millet sent to the *Salon* of 1863 three pictures, one of which was an audacious venture: "A Peasant Leaning on his Hoe," "A Woman Carding Wool," and "A Shepherd Bringing Home his Sheep." Having received a second-class medal in 1853, he could outrage the jury with impunity. The first, he well knew, would never have been hung by them. Apropos of this wretched peasant, whose tragic and sinister figure displeased the delicate and timid, a furious battle raged. Shall I reprint the bitter words? No. Passions were greatly excited, and even the gentlest, Théophile Gautier, for instance, became ferocious.

Woman Carding Wool.

Paul de Saint Victor was not less hot, but Millet was bravely defended by Pelloquet and others, and the battle ended in a sonnet in the "Nain Jaune," to Millet and his peasant.

During the struggle, Millet took refuge in his studio, which looked like a barn, and where for friends he had a couple of casts from the antique, a few dried branches hung against the wall, and the sky, which could be seen through the higher panes of his window.

In the evening, leaning on the wall of his garden, he gave himself up to long, silent meditation, watching the setting sun flood the woods and plains with its flaming vapors; then he would go back to his family, strengthened in his belief, and saying to himself: "There lies the truth. Let us fight for it." In one of these moments he wrote a sort of confession of faith to me:

"The gossip about my 'Man with a Hoe' seemed to me all very strange, and I am obliged to you for letting me know it, as it furnishes me with another opportunity to wonder at the ideas which people attribute to me. In what club have my critics ever met me? Socialist? Why, I really might answer, like the Auvergnat *commissionaire*: 'They say I'm a Saint-Simonist. It isn't true. I don't know what a "Saint-Simonist" is.'

"Is it impossible to admit that one can have some sort of an idea in seeing a man devoted to gaining his bread by the sweat of his brow. Some tell me that I deny the charms of the country. I find much more than charms,—I find infinite glories. I see as well as they do the little flowers of which Christ said that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. I see the halos of dandelions, and the sun, also, which spreads out beyond the world its glory in the clouds. But I see as well, in the plain, the steaming horses at work, and in a rocky place a man, all worn out, whose '*han!*' has been heard since morning, and who tries to straighten himself a moment and breathe. The drama is surrounded by beauty.

"It is not my invention. This 'cry of the ground' has been heard long ago. My critics are men of taste and education, but I can not put myself in their shoes, and as I have never seen anything but fields since I was born, I try to say as best I can what I saw and felt when I was at work. Those who want to do better have, I'm sure, full chance.

"I stop, for you know how garrulous I become when I begin this subject. But I would like to say how flattered I felt by the articles you sent me. If you happen to know the authors, tell them of the pleasure I took in them.

* * *

J.-F. MILLET."

Soon after this letter, Millet wrote a letter to Pelloquet apropos of articles published in "L'Exposition." Pelloquet had it printed in the "Moniteur du Calvados," and I will give it at length. We can see Millet's opinion on art, and the virility of his mind.

"BARBIZON, June 2d, 1863.

"MONSIEUR: I am very much pleased at the manner in which you speak of my pictures at the Exhibition. The pleasure is especially great because of your manner of speaking of art in general. You belong to the very small number of persons who believe (alas for those who do not believe it) that all art is a language, and that a language is made to express thoughts. Say it, and say it over again! Perhaps it will make some one reflect. If more people believed it, we would not see so much aimless writing and painting. It is called skillful, and those who make a business of it are greatly praised,—but truly, and if, in fact, it is real skill, should it not be employed only to accomplish good work, and then hide itself modestly behind the work? Should skill open a shop on its own account? I have read—I don't know where—'Woe to the artist who shows his talent before his work.' It would be very absurd if the wrist took precedence of the brain. I do not remember, word for word, what Poussin says in one of his letters about the trembling of his hand, at a time when his head was in good working order, but this is about the gist of it: And although it (the hand) is weak, yet it must still be the servant of the other, etc. Once more, if more people believed as you do, they

would not so resolutely devote themselves to flattering bad taste and evil passions for their own profit and without care for right; as Montaigne says so well, instead of naturalizing art they artificialize nature.

"I would be glad of a chance of talking with you, but as that is not possible, at any rate at present, I will try, at the risk of boring you, to tell you some things which are to me matters of faith, and which I would like to express in my work:

"That things should not look as if they were brought together by accident and for the moment, but that they should have among themselves an innate and necessary connection. I want the people I paint to look as if they were dedicated to their station—that it would be impossible for them to ever think of being anything but what they are. A work should be all of a piece, and people and things should be there for an end. I wish to put strongly and fully all that is necessary, so much so that I think things weakly said had better not be said at all, because they are, in a manner, deflowered and spoiled; but I profess the greatest horror of uselessness (however brilliant) and filling up. Such things can have no result but to take off the attention and weaken the whole.

"It is not so much the objects represented as the desire of the artist to represent them, and this desire creates the degree of power with which he has executed his work. One can say that everything is beautiful in its own time and place, and on the other hand, that nothing is beautiful which comes at the wrong time.

"Let us have no weakening of character; let Apollo be Apollo, and Socrates be Socrates. Do not combine the two—they would both lose by it. Which is the handsomer, a straight tree or a crooked tree? The one that is in its place. I therefore conclude that the beautiful is the suitable.

"This might be infinitely developed and proved by endless examples. Understand that I do not speak of absolute beauty, for I do not know what it is, and it seems to me only a tremendous joke. I think people who think and talk about it do so because they have no eyes for natural objects; they are stultified by 'finished art,' and think nature not rich enough to furnish all needs. Good people, they poetize instead of being poets. Characterize! that is the object. Vasari says that Baccio Bandinelli made a figure to represent

Eve, but getting further in his work, he found that his figure was a little thin in the flank for an Eve. He simply gave her the attributes of Ceres, and the Eve became a Ceres. We may admit that, as Bandinelli was a clever man, there must have been some bits of superb modeling in the figure, and great knowledge, but nevertheless it had no determined character, and was a most miserable work. It was neither fish nor flesh.

"Excuse me for having spoken at such length, and perhaps to so little purpose, and let me add that if you should be wandering in the neighborhood of Barbizon, you would favor me by stopping a moment at my house.

"J.-F. MILLET."

When the *Salon* of 1863 closed, Millet felt that with it had ended a theatrical representation in which he had unwillingly played the part of a too prominent actor. He returned to his drawings—compositions of rustic scenes. "I never can paint all I want to," he said to me. "My life would not be long enough, and I must express, by some quicker and less complicated methods, all the subjects which remain in my mind from my own home, and from the part of the country in which I live. The drawings, indeed, are my only resource. Since picture-lovers despise my paintings, I must try to find for these summary compositions people who will understand me and who can buy them."

Some one proposed that he should do some religious pictures which could be photographed for sale. He thereupon drew the "Flight into Egypt" twice, full of mystery and rustic kindliness. Saint Joseph was seen carrying the infant Christ in his arms, like a precious treasure; the black night was only lighted by the halo around the child,—a beautiful thought, which Millet rendered like an early master. He also made a "Christ Rising from the Tomb."

The Resurrection.

In this drawing, Christ, glorified, springs toward heaven as if shot from a mortar; the guards, blinded, frightened, throw themselves on the ground, while the God-man, calm and powerful, finishes his earthly *rôle* in a dizzying upward flight. The invention was superb and new.

X.

Illustrations of Theocritus — Interest in Delacroix — In Japanese Art — "Shepherds Bringing Home a New-born Calf."

MILLET soon abandoned these Biblical compositions, and devoted himself to Theocritus, whose works a young friend, M. Chassaing, had sent him. He found here subjects of country life, and we shall see him criticise sharply the translator for his ignorance of country things.

The letter is addressed to M. Chassaing:

"BARBIZON, July 20.

"DEAR SIR: I have received the two books which you sent me, Theocritus and Robert Burns, and I am doubly grateful, first, for your kind thought in sending them, and then for the pleasure which the works themselves have given me.

"I must tell you that I seized first Theocritus, and did not leave it till I had devoured the contents. It has a naïve charm, peculiarly attractive, which is not to be found in the same degree in Virgil. It is when I take it word for word that I am most delighted; I find things much better there than

in the translation at the end. Why are not words used to depict, instead of weakening the meaning by an obscure sound, and often a pretentious conciseness? If I could talk to you about it, I could doubtless make myself understood. I feel I am making a mistake in starting a question of this kind, but I will nevertheless try to give you a little sample of what I mean.

"In the first idyl, on the vase upon which all kinds of things are sculptured, among others is a vine, full of ripe grapes, which a little fellow guards, sitting on a wall; but on both sides are two foxes; one surveys the rows, devouring the ripe grapes. Does not 'surveys the rows' show you the planting of a grape-vine? Does it not make it real, and can't you see the fox trotting up and down, going from one row to another? It is a picture, an image! You are there. But in the translation this living image is so attenuated that it would hardly strike you. 'Two foxes, one gets into the vineyard and devours the grapes.' O translator, it is not enough to understand Greek — you must also know a vineyard to be struck by the accuracy of your poet's image, that it may spur you to the exertion of rendering it well! And so on with everything. But I come back to that: I can't see the fox trotting in the translator's vineyard. I stop — I have come to the end of my paper.

"I must tell you that Burns pleases me greatly; he has thoroughly his own flavor — he smacks of the soil. We will talk about it, I trust.

"My friend Sensier writes that you have been to see him. He says he will soon have some proofs taken, and that he is only waiting for a solution which you, perhaps, can hurry along. This is what he says. As for myself, I work a great deal, and the reading of Theocritus proves to me that one is never so Greek as in painting naïvely one's own impressions, no matter where they were received, and Burns proves it also. It makes me wish more ardently than ever to express some of the things of my own home, the home where I lived.

"Accept again, my dear sir, my thanks, and if it is at all possible, come from time to time and spend a day here. J.-F. MILLET."

"BARBIZON, 4th Aug., 1863.

"SIR: I am very happy to hear that you are soon coming, and that for a double reason, for I shall have the pleasure of seeing you and at the same

time I can tell you all I have thought of them [the books], for I will be able to say to you in five minutes more than I could write in two hours. I will only say, in general, that it is a great while since I have read anything modern that has such a quality. Even if I were capable of the task, I should not wish to measure him [Mistral] with Homer, Dante, Shakspere, etc., but I am convinced that he belongs to the same family, whatever his stature. We will talk about it—it is worth it; we will talk also about the little volume, 'Au Village,' which you put in with 'Miréio.' I will not say any more, for I would rather talk than write.

"Believe me that I will be delighted to have you come, and receive my thanks beforehand. J.-F. MILLET."

"BARBIZON, 14th Oct., 1863.

"The pleasure, M. Chassaing, which you have given me in sending me Shakspere is very great, and a double pleasure—first, because of your wish to please me, which I think a great deal of, and then because it would be impossible to have chosen anything better adapted to that end. But, as there is no pleasure without pain, one thing distresses me in all this, and that is the trouble which you give yourself for me. I am overwhelmed and almost ashamed. And to think that this is not all, and that Dante will be added to Shakspere! * * * J.-F. MILLET."

M. Chassaing had been struck with the just and profound reflections which Millet made upon the great classic authors, among others Shakspere and Dante. He sent him translations by François Victor Hugo and by Lamennais. Millet's notes, written on the margin, were certainly those of a profound observer.

Theocritus pleased Millet greatly. He found pictures painted by the Greek poet which he easily translated into the language of his own art. He divided his time between the compositions inspired by the antique and a certain shepherdess, about whom he spoke to no one, but who had taken possession of his heart and soul—a

shepherdess in the fields, fresh and sturdy, yet pensive as a Joan of Arc "listening to the voices,"—one of his most beautiful pictures. We will speak of this shepherdess later.

But he came back to Theocritus, and had a plan, formed on the advice of M. Chassaing, to publish a first idyl. He was soon stopped by the difficulties of such an undertaking. No publisher would compromise himself by venturing to bring out Theocritus translated by Millet.

"BARBIZON, November 8, 1863.

"* * * M. Chassaing thinks that the best thing for the Theocritus would be to offer an idyl to a publisher—an idyl already printed and illustrated—that he thinks no publisher could resist, and would then be willing to carry on the work.

"He said he would combine with his friend Rollin for means to get the necessary funds together to accomplish this much. He explained them a little to me, but the devil take me if I remember these things, which I don't even understand while they are being explained to me. He will doubtless write to you, and you can judge whether his idea is practicable. Anyhow, I have begun to scribble some compositions for the first idyl: Thyrsis and a goat-herd seated near Pan's grotto; Thyrsis playing the syrinx and the other listening. There will be a vase, of which the figures in sculpture will be reproduced; I will treat them naturally. A beautiful woman, a divine creature, whom two men are quarreling about; an old man fishing with a net in the sea; a child sitting on a wall to watch a grape-vine beside it,—but so taken up with braiding a straw cage to catch grasshoppers that he does not see two foxes near by—one filching away his breakfast, the other eating the finest grapes in the vineyard: these are the three subjects of the vase.

"There remains the death of Daphne, which is the subject which Thyrsis plays upon the syrinx, and at whose death are present Mercury, Venus, Priapus, the goat-herds, and shepherds. Five subjects in all, and I really must do them, all five. All the idyls would not take so many; some could be expressed with one picture, or two at most."

Millet had often pondered on the subject of decorative art. He loved to look at the gorgeous and facile way in which Rosso, Primaticcio, Fréminet, Ambroise Dubois, and all the school of Fontainebleau covered the great walls and wide ceilings with their paintings. Their science, their splendid ruggedness of expression, attracted him like the powerful fantasies of a race of giants.

One of us, a friend who understood him, proposed to him to paint four large subjects for a house in the Boulevard Haussmann. These paintings, destined to decorate a fine dining-room, were to be the four seasons. Millet received the order with delight, though still working on his shepherdess.

"BARBIZON, 23d January, 1864.

"* * * The picture [the shepherdess] for M. Tesse is finished, but you know what the last days always are; scruples arise, and we try to strengthen the thing—to express it with all our might. * * * Could M. Tesse spare it for another week?"

"27th Jan., 1864.

"DEAR SENSIER: I will begin by thanking you for your trouble about my request from M. Tesse, for it could not have been so easy. With an amateur, one can never be sure of a good result. * * * I am glad you were pleased with my two *frottés*. Advise the gentleman as to the framing—that is, that the half of the picture shall not be covered. It ought not to be covered at all, but strips nailed outside the canvas. * * *

"I received your hundred francs, for which many thanks. At the same time I got a letter from M. Tesse, containing three hundred francs. The postwoman is struck dumb with admiration. She said, 'Two letters, good ones, and two at a time!' The fact is, they are good letters. Tell me all the news."

"BARBIZON, 5th February, 1864.

"* * * One of these days I want to tell you some of the pleasures that from time to time I have had in the midst of my sorrows, and to leave

you in writing, to the best of my ability, an acknowledgment of all the good you have done me. I want you to know that I know that you have been, if not the only one, certainly my strongest support, and should 'the sheep' ever come over to my side in a flock, I could only consider it a *causa et vana et falsa.*"

The public exhibition of the works of Delacroix began the 16th of February, 1864. Millet came to Paris to see them, and was deeply moved by them.

"4th March, 1864.

"* * * Could I, like Lazarus, pick up a few crumbs under the table of your banquet at the Delacroix sale? I am glad you have the 'Lara'; it is a very fine thing. The drawing of 'Ovid among the Scythians' was, I think, on the screen in the middle of the room, with the 'Socrates,' the 'Spartan Women,' etc. When I go to Paris I will see your purchases. But try to get me some sketch. Is Burty going to make fac-similes of the album he has bought? It must be very interesting. Who has bought the lithographic stones of the Goetz? M. Robert? At last poor Delacroix has given Paris a fever. The phrases you copy from the sketches are very true. * * *"

He found the means, poor as he was, to pick up fifty sketches, which he studied a long time with admiration.

The following letter is a little interlude. It points to the introduction of Japanese art in France. It may be remembered with what enthusiasm this art was received by the artists. I was the first to bring it to the notice of Rousseau and Millet, who lived like hermits. Rousseau was taken with it as with a fever; he wanted everything himself, and if Millet or I went hunting and discovered some new bit of this strange art, it seemed to him that we had robbed him.

"Barbizon, 16th March, 1864.

"Dear Sensier: What plaguey wind is this that blows on us from Japan? I, too, came near having a very disagreeable affair with Rousseau in regard to some pictures which I brought back from Paris. While I wait to hear what happened between you and Rousseau, I want you to believe that no sort of meanness has been done by me toward you. I want all this made plain before my journey, for I should be a most unhappy man all the rest of my life if for one cause or another any cloud should come between us. I have left my work to say this to you. If you have no other news from me before then, come to see me and my picture before it goes.

"J.-F. Millet."

Millet and Rousseau had an explanation; it was only a lovers' quarrel; as for me, it was soon over, and I left Rousseau in possession of all he demanded.

The *Salon* of 1864 opened on the 1st of May. Millet was represented by two canvases of equal size—a shepherdess with her flock, and peasants bringing home a calf born in the fields.

We will leave the "Shepherdess," whose success was undoubted, and go to the rescue of the poor calf, which was maltreated by the public, the caricaturists, and the roughs of the studios. All the press repeated the same criticism; it was almost unanimous in reproaching Millet with letting his men carry a calf on a litter, as if they were carrying the Host. Millet saw this rustic scene at his home, when he went there on a visit, and drew and painted the whole from nature. The attitude, the carriage, the characters were therefore all carefully observed; the bearers even belonged to his own family. The unfortunate calf was literally torn to pieces by the critics. Millet himself undertook to defend it:

"BARBIZON, 10th May, 1864.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: Apropos of what Jean Rousseau says about my men, who carry a calf as if it were the sacrament or the bull Apis,—how does he expect them to carry it? If he admits that they carry well, I don't ask any more for my own satisfaction, and I should say to him: The expression of two men carrying something on a litter depends upon the weight which hangs from their arms. So, if the weight were the same, whether they had the ark of the covenant or a calf, a lump of gold or a stone, the same expression would be the result; and even if they were filled with admiration and reverence for what they were carrying, still they would be subject to the law of weight, and their expression could only be that of the weight. If they put it down for a moment and then began again to carry it, the law of weight would remain the same. The more they wish to preserve the object carried, the more careful will be their manner of walking, and they will keep step; they must, in every case and always, keep step; if they do not, their fatigue will be more than doubled. And this is the whole secret of all this solemnity so much found fault with. But it is easy enough to see in Paris two *commissionaires* carrying a bureau on a litter. Any one can see how they keep step. Let M. Jean Rousseau and any of his friends try to do the same and still retain their usual gait! Don't they know that a false step may make the burden bounce off? Enough. * * *"

Thoré was almost the only one who took the "Calf" seriously. His article, published in the "Indépendence Belge," is a charming description, a peasant scene *à la* George Sand—but even he admired with some reserve.

As for the "Shepherdess," things from the first took another tone. Its success was defined immediately by a warm article by M. Castagnary:

"Let us first salute M. Millet," he cries. "He is a master, and his 'Shepherdess' a masterpiece. To the right and left in the background the plain

stretches far away, and on every side passes beyond the limits of the frame. The shepherdess walks along knitting, her flock follow her. * * * If you judge the worth of a work by the depth of feeling which it excites in you, this humble idyl must be considered as one of the most important pictures of the *Salon.* The great artist has put his whole heart into it, his whole soul. Those who accuse him of willfully exaggerating the ugliness of our peasants will be satisfied this time. The young shepherdess has all the beauty and all the rustic grace compatible with her condition and race. This is an important detail; but what we must look at specially, and praise without reserve, is the harmony, the intimate union, of all the parts of this beautiful landscape; the sheep are at home on the plain, the shepherdess belongs to them as much as they to her. The earth and sky, the scene and the actors, all answer one another, all hold together—belong together. The unity is so perfect and the impression resulting from it is so true, that the eye does not ask how the thing has been done. The handicraft disappears. The mind is entirely satisfied with the charm of the picture. Is not this the height of art?"

For this picture, the Director of the Beaux Arts offered Millet fifteen hundred francs. He had already sold it for two thousand. After the *Salon,* he received a medal—this was all.

"BARBIZON, June 6th, 1864.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: Thank you for the number of the 'Figaro' that you sent. It is really very curious, and, by the way, gives me a desire to meet Jean Rousseau if it could happen naturally. It might be of real use. He does not sufficiently understand that things are of value only according to their fundamental qualities, and he still believes that the care with which a thing is done, even if it is aimless, ought to be taken into account. In fact, it would be a good thing to make him understand that things exist only to the extent of the stuff they contain.

"Think how this may be brought about. I will make a sketch for the 'Autographe'; you may tell whoever it concerns. Blanchet brought the canvases. Let us pray Him who gives us intelligence not to desert us, for we need all our powers to bring this task to a fortunate conclusion. * * *"

Shepherdess.

"15th June.

"My panels are under way, and, as far as I can judge, my compositions don't look so very bad. I am painting them with ordinary oil colors; I did not like to embark in the Haro paints, especially as the trial I made of them was not exactly what I wanted. I hope in a week the effect of my compositions will be decided. I dig at it like a slave,—am entirely absorbed in my work. I work till dark, and then I don't go out at all; but I do not want to rest until I have got the thing well in shape. I must send you the sketch for the 'Autographe.'

J.-F. MILLET."

"20th July.

"I live among sick people. My wife suffers horribly with her head; several of the children are ailing."

"13th August.

"I have the news,* and we leave instantly, Rousseau and I, to see you. Courage, if you can."

"9th October.

"* * * I have just had a visit from M. Thomas de Colmar [the proprietor of the house in the Boulevard Haussmann]. At first he seemed pleased on seeing my panels, then more pleased, finally nearly enthusiastic. When you see Feydeau, find out what is the real state of the case. He told me that curiosity had been greatly excited about the pictures. Some had said: You must be a man of great taste to have dared to ask M. Millet, etc. And he prides himself on the boldness which his taste has given him, for he does not seem to dream that Feydeau has influenced his taste in the least. Well, whatever the source of his content, let us be thankful for it. 'Summer' especially seemed to move him. * * *"

"MY DEAR SENSIER: I don't know what to say about your sad condition, except that I am sorry for you. Who can doctor such diseases?

"Yours, J.-F. MILLET."

* Sensier had lost a child. Millet made a portrait of the little girl, dead.—M.

"BARBIZON, 21st Oct., 1864.

"* * * I certainly want to go back to the exhibition of Delacroix's pictures, to see again what I have already seen and what I have still to see. What you tell me of Couture and the others does not surprise me, though their manner of procedure is infamous.* Those people feel that they have produced nothing worth while; for to have done more or less work which means nothing is not to have produced. There is production only where there is expression. They do as most feeble people do—revenge themselves on those who are better constituted than they. It must be, as you say, that the great mass of the artists are very inert, for otherwise these would not dare to do what they do. * * *

"Rousseau thinks Delacroix very badly used, and is very indignant. * * *"

"BARBIZON, 18th Nov., 1864.

"* * * I have been talking to Rousseau about the reproductions from Giotto, of which you spoke; but I could not say anything for certain, except that they were superb and touching. Where are the originals, and by whom published? * * *"

"BARBIZON, Dec., 1864.

"Tillot and his family have gone to Paris for the winter. Rousseau and his wife have gone at the same time. Rousseau wants to see a doctor about the pains in his back. I must see the perspector, M. Mayeux, who is said to be a very clever man, and M. Andrieu, a pupil of Delacroix, who may tell me some useful things on the subject of large decorative work. I must see the Louvre again, Paul Veronese and the Italian masters, who were so strong in decoration, and Poussin, who also understood it. In fact, I will be a week in Paris, running about and studying; I should like to see again, if possible,

* Millet's letter mentions three names. We suppress two, who, indeed, are artists little worthy of judging of Delacroix. As to Couture, his antipathy for the painter of the "Crusaders entering Constantinople" is well known. Having already discussed it verbally, he wished his disdain to be preserved in black and white. The article published by Couture in the "Revue Libérale" of the 30th March, 1867, will be remembered. The impertinence with which he speaks of "the intelligent desires" and the "unfortunate efforts" of "poor Delacroix" goes beyond the limits of ordinary criticism.—M.

the Chamber of Deputies and Peers, where Delacroix has done some great things. Before putting my hand to the canvas, I want to fill myself with these masters, who are so strong and so learned. I dread the day when I begin work definitely."

"28th December.

"* * * My eyes are very painful * * * it hurts them to write these few lines. * * * We wish you all that can be desired for those whom we love well, and we pray Him who orders our lives to keep far from you any such sorrow as you have experienced this year."

XI.

Millet's Decorative Paintings — Death of his Sister Emilie — Visit to Vichy.

HERE the MS. of Alfred Sensier comes to an end.* But there are notes in pencil on the margins of catalogues, bits from newspapers, and, best of all, packages of long letters from Millet, with which we try to continue the story. We shall leave Millet to speak as much as possible. He wrote a great deal, but no one will be surprised to hear that all the letters are not equally interesting. They are full of intimate details. He tells of his garden; like a good neighbor, he also cares for Sensier's, who was working at the Minister's, and seldom came to Barbizon; always pursued by notes falling due, he writes about selling his drawings, and in the midst of these annoyances one of his children falls ill, and he tells his anguish, and his joy when little Charles is saved. In the

* [Owing to the death of Sensier, in 1877, M. Paul Mantz takes up and concludes the narrative.—TRANS.]

first letters of 1865, he tells in detail the sufferings of Rousseau, whose health became more and more precarious; as for himself, he has his usual headaches and discomforts. Yet he works on without stopping; he finishes the decorative pictures for M. Thomas, and speaks often of them, and of the difficulty of painting the ceiling in such a cramped studio.

"BARBIZON, 26th January, 1865.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: It really seems very difficult to get permission to see the pictures at Fontainebleau. * * * If it is absolutely necessary to specify which pictures I want to see, it would be the 'Salle Henri II.' and the chapel where are the paintings of Martin Fréminet. * * * I should like to have seen the 'Antonella da Messina' of which you speak, and the other early Italians, and the Claude Lorraine and the old Greek things, which are not to be despised.† * * *

"My wife is not so well. She is suffering more. We will soon go to Paris. I have just answered M. Chassaing, who offered his services to us in the most devoted way, in case she should have to go to Vichy. He is full of kindness and goodness of heart."

"BARBIZON, 30th January.

"The weather is dark and rainy, the sky cloudy and low, but you know I like it better than the sunlight. All is in a rich and melancholy color which leaves my eyes quiet and my head calm. * * * At Fontainebleau I saw again Rosso and Primaticcio. They are strong fellows. They are of the decadence, it is true—the fixings of their figures are often absurd and in doubtful taste, but what a strength of conception! And how strongly this rude *bonhomie* reminds one of a primitive age! It is as child-like as a fairy tale and as real as the *bonhomie* of old times. In their art there is a reminiscence of Lancelot and Amadis de Gaul, and the germ of Ariosto, Tasso, and Perrault. One could spend hours before those good-natured giants."

† The sale of the collection of the Cte. de Pourtales.

"BARBIZON, 29th March, 1865.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: I am glad you have the articles on the *Salon* to do. Believe me, I will do all I can to tell you everything I can think of, either about art in general or particular things in this connection. * * * It seems to me you might show—going back somewhat—that art began to decline from the moment the artist did not lean directly and naïvely upon impressions made by nature; that cleverness naturally and rapidly took the place of nature, and decadence then began. Strength departs without constant relation with nature, and as example the fable of Antæus could be used, whose powers diminished when his foot did not touch the ground, and, on the contrary, took new vigor every time he touched it. * * * Show that, for the same reason,—the abandoning of nature,—art becomes more and more weakened. Give as many examples as possible. Once again, I am sorry we can not talk it over. I send * * some extracts in which you can find some good quotations, or else take the substance of them,—Montaigne, Palissy, Piccolpassi, and his translator, Claudius Popelyn. I will try to find others. I will ruminate upon it, and say as best I can what comes into my head. At the bottom it always comes to this: a man must be touched himself in order to touch others, and all that is done from theory, however clever, can never attain this end, for it is impossible that it should have the breath of life. Quote the expression of Saint Paul, '*Aes sonans et cymbalum tinniens.*' * * *"

"7th April, 1865.

"MY DEAR FEUARDENT: You are at last off for Italy! If you find photographs, either from the antique, especially those less known here, or from the painters, from Cimabue to Michael Angelo inclusive, things at not too high a price, buy them, and we will arrange here to relieve you of them. Each place through which you go has its peculiar attractions; see them well. For the old masters, be sure to get only those done directly from the originals, and not from engravings. Do not take anything of Raphael; he is to be found in Paris. Find out carefully at Naples whether the paintings in Herculaneum and Pompeii have been reproduced. In fact, bring whatever you find, figures and animals. Diaz's son, the one who died, brought some very good ones, sheep among other things. Of figures, take of course those that

The Washerwomen.

smack least of the Academy and the model,—in fact, all that is good, ancient or modern, licit or illicit. Enough. Send us your little brats. Another idea that strikes me: if you find some books with pictures,—old books,—get them if you can."

"10th April, 1865.

"DEAR SENSIER: * * * I can't remember what Michael Angelo says about academies. I have no 'Vasari'; looking over the book you would find some excellent things. Look at a book that Rousseau has, 'Le Moyen Age et la Renaissance,' the article (I think) on the history of French art. * * * See Letourneur's preface for his translation of Shakspere. I think he says some pretty good things about what makes the real superiority of creative men over those who are only learned and practice well their profession. Rousseau has his work. You could enlarge on all this, and show the gulf between what is reasoned and what is felt."

"BARBIZON, 22d August, 1865.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: We went with Rousseau to see Corot and Commairas. We had the kindest possible reception, and our day was very agreeable. We dined at De Knyff's, where we were entertained like princes, as Diaz says. As for the table service, Alfred Feydeau is nowhere. Each dish a new course. Splendid wines, etc. I must confess that I was more embarrassed than delighted with this kind of dinner, and more than once watched those who were served before me out of the corners of my eyes, to see what they did with their food. Corot's pictures are beautiful, but show nothing new.

"We are pretty well. I have almost finished my ceiling. * * *"

The four scenes which he had painted for M. Thomas represented the four seasons. Spring and Summer, eight feet by four, were set into the wood-work, Autumn in the ceiling. Winter, a little smaller than the two others, was fixed in the chimney-piece.

Millet had thought, in undertaking a piece of work new to him, that it would be prudent to see once more the Italian

work of the decadence which was to be found at Fontainebleau. But he made little use of their extravagant lessons. If he dressed his figures in a vaguely antique fashion, he kept his own rusticity and his own special poetry; except in the matter of costume, the pictures were large Millets. Spring was Daphnis and Chloe, who, in a landscape with a statue of Pan, are feeding some birds; a reaper bronzed by the sun, a sort of familiar Ceres holding a sickle, was Summer walking through the yellow grain; Autumn a Bacchanal; and Winter represented Anacreon's "L'Amour Mouillé."

When they were put in their places, Sensier wrote about them. When, in 1875, they came to be sold at the Hôtel Drouot, they provoked much discussion and a little disappointment. Let us say, frankly, that in life-sized figures Millet was not at his ease.* The old symbolism had stood in his way, and the painter touched by rustic scenes had not the showy virtues of a decorator.

[* We are told by Mr. Wyatt Eaton, who had heard much of these decorations, and who finally had the opportunity to study them carefully during their brief exhibition at Hôtel Drouot, that "the disappointment felt by himself and others, deeply interested in Millet's art, was that of not being able to see the decorations in the places for which they were designed. The work itself was another proof of Millet's comprehensiveness and power. Although not painted in the usual manner of large decoration, the effect of the panels in the room where they had belonged must have been complete and surpassingly fine. But, to judge them in the strong light of the picture-gallery, and without the requisite distance, was to ignore Millet's intuition and accomplishment." We do not understand the statement by M. Mantz, that in life-sized figures Millet was not at his ease. Sensier's description of the large "Sheep-shearer" has already been given. He and other critics write of the work as one of the masterpieces of painting; the figures in this picture are three-quarters length and life-size. "The Young Shepherdess" was one of the most admired paintings in the posthumous collection; this figure is full length and life-size. The large "Sheep-shearer" is owned in Boston, and "The Young Shepherdess" has been for some time on exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.—TRANS.]

"BARBIZON, 28th December, 1865.

"MY DEAR M. GAVET: We have fog effects perfectly superb, and the most fairy-like frost, beyond any imagination. The forest was wonderfully beautiful, but I am not sure that the most modest things — the bushes and the briars, tufts of grass, and, in fine, all the little sprays of every kind — were not, in proportion, the most beautiful of all. It seems as if Nature wished to give them their chance to retaliate and show that they are inferior to nothing — poor down-trodden things."

In 1865, Millet began a series of drawings for the architect M. Gavet, to whom the above is addressed. This lasted several years, as M. Gavet was an insatiable lover of his work, and Millet had amassed so many notes that his memory could not be exhausted. He used crayon, pastel, water-colors, and seemed at ease in every mode of expression. Some of his drawings are equal to his best paintings. When, in 1875, the collection of M. Gavet was exhibited, even those who thought they knew Millet were surprised at the variety and grandeur of his work.

"BARBIZON, Jan. 3d, 1866.

"DEAR SENSIER: * * * I am working on my 'End of the Village [of Gréville] Opening on the Sea.' I think my old elm begins to look gnawed by the wind's tooth. What would I give to bathe it in space as I see it in my memory! O aërial spaces which made me dream when I was a child, will I never be allowed even to suggest you? * * * Your laurel-tree is bound in straw against the frost. Tillot must have told you about it, — the frost, — but nothing can give you an idea of it. To speak of the 'Arabian Nights' would be commonplace and petty. These things are part of the treasures of the snow, which the book of Job speaks of."

A month later he went to Gréville, his sister Emilie being at death's door.

"GRÉVILLE (HAMEAU LE FÈVRE), 6th Feb., 1866.

"* * * When I arrived, my brother Jean-Louis said, 'She no longer knows any one.' I approached her bed and called her, naming my own name. She remained some time apparently hearing nothing. At last she opened her eyes a little, with an expression of surprise; I spoke my name again, and then thrills ran over her poor face, worn and burned by the fever; then her eyes filled with tears, abundant tears — enough to wet her cheeks. She took my hand with hers convulsively, and said, with as much strength as she could gather, 'François!' Poor, dear girl! her heart was still alive and loving enough to pass through its pitiful garment of flesh and show itself to me. Imagine, my dear Sensier, the effect upon me. * * *

"My old elm is blown down. Everything passes away — and we, too."

On the 11th his sister died.

About this time the doctors sent Mme. Millet to Vichy. He writes to M. Gavet:

"VICHY, 17th June, 1866.

"* * * I have not had much to do with the people at the baths, but I have made acquaintance with the environs of Vichy, where I find some pretty things. I make as many sketches as possible. * * * In many ways the country has points of resemblance with Normandy, — green fields, surrounded by hedges. As there are many water-courses, there are many mills. The women watch the cows, spinning on a spindle, — a thing I was not familiar with, and which I propose to use a great deal. It is not in the least the shepherdess with her distaff of the pastorals of the last century. It has nothing to do with Florian, I assure you. * * * The little carts of the peasants are drawn by cows. The wagons which they use for bringing home the hay have four wheels, and are drawn by oxen or cows. * * *

"J.-F. MILLET."

The 26th of June, he tells Sensier that he has made fifty sketches and water-colors. He adds:

"The country, on the whole, is a little like many parts of Normandy. The country people are much more peasants than at Barbizon; they have that

good, stupid kind of awkwardness which does not remind one in the least of the neighborhood of fashionable baths. The women in general have phizes which express the very opposite of spitefulness or unkindness, and which would answer as the type of faces in Gothic art. This race can not be unkind. They speak to you when they meet you. The other day I began a sketch near a house; I had not been at it long before a man came out with a chair. He did not wish me to stand, so near his home."

From Vichy he made a rapid excursion into Auvergne, where M. Chassaing awaited him. He saw Clermont, Issoire, and the mountains. The voyage only lasted a few days. The 19th of July he was again in Barbizon, writing to the friend who had shown him the Mont Dore and its splendors:

"* * * My head is full of all we saw together in Auvergne. Everything dances together in my brain; calcined ground, sharp rocks, splits, barrenness, and greeneries; the glory of God dwelling upon the heights, and other heights veiled in darkness. I hope all these things will finally arrange themselves and go each into its own pigeon-hole."

Millet became more and more a landscapist, and his letters accord with his works. He writes to Sensier:

"One must admit that the things one sees out-of-doors in this dull weather are very touching, and are a great compensation for the little time one has to work. I would not be deprived of it for anything, and if it were proposed to me to take me to the south for the winter, I should totally refuse. O sadness of field and wood! I should miss too much in not seeing you!"

XII.

The Universal Exhibition of 1867 — Death of Rousseau — Millet made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor — Visits Switzerland with Sensier — The War with Germany — Millet at Cherbourg — He Revisits his Birthplace, with Sensier.

THE Universal Exhibition was in preparation, and the artists could send any works produced since the year 1855. Millet's friends had some trouble in bringing together his scattered pictures; he himself could never have surmounted the difficulties. The annual *Salon* opened at the same time, and Millet sent a landscape, "Winter," and another picture, "The Goose-girl."

"Barbizon, 26th March, 1867.

"My Dear Sensier: What you say in your last letter about my pictures at the Universal Exposition, the opinion of Meissonier and others, all gives me great pleasure. As to the cross, I assure you I do not flatter myself, and I do not imagine that I will get it. Besides there are plenty of people more anxious than I, who roll logs more persistently than I am willing to do. I only desire this: To live by my work and bring up my children decently, and give expression to the greatest possible number of my impres-

sions. Also, at the same time, to have the sympathy of the people I love. If all this were secured to me, I should think myself fortunate."

"April 1st, 1867.

"My Dear Sensier: To-day is the opening of the Exhibition, if the programme remains unchanged. I am not without anxiety, I assure you, in thinking of it. It is a serious question for me and for others. * * * "

Millet was wrong to be alarmed. His exhibition made an impressive appearance—it was typical work of varied and strong character. The pictures were "Death and the Wood-cutter" (refused in 1859), "The Gleaners," "The Shepherdess with her Flock," the large "Sheep-shearer," "The Shepherd," "The Sheep-fold," "The Potato-planters," "The Potato-harvest," and, finally, "The Angelus." He had chosen well, but he felt anxious, as was natural with one who had not always been well received.

Théophile Silvestre, after some hesitation, declared himself for Millet, and in his new zeal almost thought he had invented him, but he scarcely knew the painter or the man. He asked Sensier for notes.

"Barbizon, 23d April, 1867.

"My Dear Sensier: * * * I entirely rely upon what you may have said to M. Silvestre, and since I must give my opinion, you have done well to dwell upon the rustic side, for, to tell the truth, if that side is not marked in what I have done, I have done nothing. I reject with my whole soul the democratic side, as it is understood by the clubs, and which some have desired to attribute to me. I only have wished people to think of the man who gains his bread by the sweat of his brow. Let that be said, for I have never dreamed of being a pleader in any cause. I am a peasant—a peasant. As to explaining my way of painting, that would be rather difficult, for I have not taken much heed of it."

"30th April.

"DEAR SENSIER: You may believe that I am well pleased to get a first medal. Rousseau wrote to me about it. * * * With some exceptions, Silvestre's description of my pictures is pretty good, but too much inclined to his peculiar views. I attempted, timidly and discreetly, to hint some things in the sense in which I should better like to see them understood, but when it is so directly a question of one's self, one seems to be making a fuss. His peasant is a little the peasant which Proudhon saw. A detail of no importance to the public, and which has none, perhaps, except in my personal tastes, is that in the 'Potato-planters' he saw a piece of old sheep-skin in the *sabots*. If I wanted anything there it would have been straw. In my part of the country, a man who would put sheep-skin in his *sabots* or on them would have been an object of derision. I passed over this little detail, as I did not dare make any more corrections. It is true he only read me his notes."

"Winter" at the *Salon* was considerably praised. Théodore Pelloquet wrote of it:

"* * * What a melancholy impression, full of poetry and reality, this painting makes upon the attentive and sympathetic spectator! It is not at first attractive, and we must look more than once to understand and admire it. Those who are charmed by the brilliant puerilities of clever and rapid handling are more or less indifferent to the execution, so simple, so naïve, yet so intelligent, of this master, and his profound sentiment for nature, and are more or less insensible to the quality of his powerful and true color."

When this article appeared, Millet had gone to Vichy again with his wife.

"VICHY, 26th June.

"MY DEAR ROUSSEAU: Here we are again, making the acquaintance of the gay world of Vichy. I put off from day to day telling you, fearing you might be humiliated—you who are only in Paris!

"The day after we parted, I went to see your exhibition. I must tell you now that, although I knew your Auvergne studies and those preceding

them, I was again struck, in seeing them together, by the fact that a power is a power, from its very beginning. From the very first, you show a freshness of eye which leaves no doubt as to the pleasure you have in nature; one can see that she spoke directly to you, and that you saw by your own eyes. It is *yours* and not *some other's*, as Montaigne says. I am not going to follow your steps, picture by picture, down to the present. I only want to speak of the departure, which is the important point, for it shows that a man is of the true breed. You were, from the beginning, the little oak, which was destined to become the great oak. * * *

"Yours, J.-F. MILLET."

While absent at Vichy, Millet could not realize the gravity — still, in fact, uncertain — of the disease with which his friend was stricken [softening of the brain]; but when he returned to Barbizon, in the beginning of July, he could himself observe the alarming symptoms. The doctors understood, but were silent. Indeed, it was difficult to believe that Rousseau, apparently so robust, would so suddenly decline and die.

"12th August, 1867.

"DEAR SENSIER: Rousseau continues better, though yesterday he was not very well. To-day he is better. The doctor seemed encouraged. I hope for his recovery, though perhaps it may be very slow.

"Alfred Stevens came this morning, with Puvis de Chavannes, to tell Rousseau that he is elected officer [of the Legion of Honor]. We received them — my wife and I — on the stairs, begging them not to go up, lest his quiet should be disturbed. I told him, and he seemed very much pleased."

"BARBIZON, 22d December, 1867.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: I am trembling and overwhelmed. Our poor Rousseau died this morning, at nine o'clock. His death-struggle was very painful. He often tried to speak, but his words were stifled by the rattle in his throat. Let those know whom you think should be told. Tillot telegraphed to Besançon. I write to Silvestre at the same time."

After Rousseau's death, Millet took charge of the tomb to be erected to him of rocks and trees taken from the forest of Fontainebleau. He also helped Sensier to go through his papers and art treasures, and, lastly, took care of the unhappy wife whom Rousseau had left behind with an incurable malady. Millet's headaches were very severe, and his health seemed broken. But he had a new client, M. Frédéric Hartmann, for whom he began several paintings. Unfortunately, he seems to have often been interrupted in his work, and died without having finished the promised pictures.

He had to go again to Vichy, and seems to have gained very little from this visit. He was too unwell to work; he only made a few excursions and drawings.

He sent nothing to the *Salon* [of 1868]; but the Administration remembered the absent, and at the distribution of rewards on August 13th, Millet was made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. The Government, never famous for promptness, had taken seventeen years to find out that Millet was a master. The men of the time had but a lukewarm taste for the works of the rustic painter. At last they had to yield, and, after long hesitation, decided to give him a ribbon. Those who were present in the *grand salon* of the Louvre at the distribution of medals, will remember that Marshal Vaillant, Minister of Fine Arts, who presided at the ceremony, obtained so unexpected a success that he became speechless. He was far from expecting the outburst which he was to produce. The name of Millet had hardly been spoken when the applause broke out, so vigorous, so energetic, so sincere, that the venerable council and its president were troubled. The Administration had chosen well, without wishing it and without

knowing it. And at the confusion of these distributers of rewards, who for once, and almost against their will, represented justice and public sentiment, the applause redoubled. Millet's success was tremendous.

Whether or not Millet felt pride from this *fête*, or rather this revenge, we do not know—there are no letters. But everything leads us to believe that he accepted his triumph with the calm modesty of a philosopher, and worked on in silence. In September, he and Sensier made a charming journey. They went to see M. Hartmann, at Munster, and saw a corner of Alsace. From Munster they went into Switzerland, for six or seven days. They first went to Bâle. "We saw the museum and the cathedral," Millet says, on the back of a letter to his wife. So the painter of "The Sheep-shearer" saw the moving masterpieces of Hans Holbein. He did not tell his impressions. The travelers were very much hurried. They saw in the rain and fog Lucerne and its famous lake, Berne, and Zurich. "I want to get back to Barbizon," Millet writes; and in a letter the next day: "My homesickness continues."

We now find him at work on an illustration for a sonnet, to be published in a curious book called "Sonnets and Etchings." There were to be only 350 examples, and the plates were to be destroyed. Millet refused to understand how, when a plate has been etched by an artist, it can enter the mind of any one to spoil the plate in order to prove to purchasers that no more proofs can be printed. Already forty-one etchers, among others Jules Jacquemart, Corot, Seymour Haden, Daubigny, Bracquemond, and Ribot, had consented to have their plates destroyed. There remained one only who was stubborn.

Millet was too much of a barbarian to understand how the height of civilization should consist in destroying a work of art. But he had to yield, for he could not be a solitary exception.

"BARBIZON, 24th Jan., 1869.

"* * * I have consented to the destruction of my plate, in spite of my desire to keep it. Between ourselves, I consider this destruction of plates the most brutal and barbarous of proceedings. I am not strong enough on commercial questions to understand the use of it, but I know that if Rembrandt and Ostade had each made one of these plates, they would have been annihilated."

"BARBIZON, 16th Feb., 1869.

"* * * The terrible death of poor Mme. Rousseau fills us with distress. It stirs up many things in the past. The poor thing has been hardly used by events. I can't think, without emotion, that she used to take care of me at times when I was ill. * * * God knows, I remember all the good she has ever done me. I pray for the peace of her poor soul."

"BARBIZON, 25th February, 1869.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: I find the album you sent me very rich and splendid in the arrangement of colors; but that is almost all that pleases me in it. I do not find the natural and the human, which are generally at the bottom of Japanese art. To me these things are rather a mere matter of curiosity, and for the price that they would cost, I would rather have other Japanese drawings, more natural (if any turn up), or some wood-engravings of the fifteenth century. * * *"

Sensier wrote, about this time, a series of articles on Rousseau, afterward published under the title "Souvenirs sur Théodore Rousseau," and many letters of this date touch upon conversations between the friends. Thoré was a devoted partisan of Rousseau, and Sensier asked Millet to give him some notes of their conver-

Shepherdess Knitting.

sations; the following letter is a reply to his request. It will seem very singular, and makes us doubt Millet's capacity as a portraitist. It is scarcely a crime to refuse to call Memling by a name he never bore, or to notice that Rembrandt's "Anatomy Lesson" is differently executed from the "Cloth-merchants," or to think that the verification of dates is of great use; but Thoré never said that subject was all, and he even wrote the contrary: for instance, that a fine drunkard of Van Ostade was worth an army of ill-painted Spartans. We feel tempted to think that Millet's recollection served him ill—that in the excitement of battle, where all talked at once, opinions were confused and exaggerated.

"BARBIZON, Feb. 1st, 1870.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: I can scarcely condense into a few words our conversations with Thoré. I shall tell you much more than you ask, and if you find anything of use in the heap, pick it out.

"Thoré, whom I had never met before, seemed to me a clever catalogue-maker, rather than a man touched by the meaning of a work of art, even with regard to Rembrandt, who was especially "his man." He spoke of a picture as painted in such a year, painted thick or thin; how certain masters signed up to such a date, etc.; that Hemling was now called Memling, an important discovery of X——.

"Rousseau whispered to me: 'It is no longer Thoré; the *savants* have spoiled him.' Rousseau was irritated that Thoré, in looking at his pictures, said, 'Ah! this one is painted like such a one of Rembrandt,' and explained its manner, etc., etc. Rousseau thought his pictures might have excited some other remarks. To finish, we had a lively discussion on Thoré's belief that the subject was of great moment in the elevation of a work of art. Rousseau and I were against him. I let Rousseau speak, as I did not know Thoré, but I found myself caught in the net. I tried to show Thoré that I thought grandeur was in the thought itself, and that everything became great that was employed in a great cause.

"A prophet comes to threaten a population with a plague and fearful devastation, and this is what the God who sends him says by his mouth: I will send you grasshoppers and locusts — my great army, etc. And the prophet makes such a description of their devastation that never has a greater desolation been imagined. I asked him whether the threat would have been more terrible if, instead of locusts, the prophet had spoken of some king with his chariots and war-horses; for the devastation is so great that nothing is untouched. The earth is denuded! Lament, husbandman, for the harvest of the field has perished! The wild asses and all creatures cry out, for there is no more grass. The object is accomplished and the imagination aroused.

"I do not know whether he was convinced by whatever truth there was in this, but he seemed appeased. You saw him on his return to Paris. I always thought he left here a little piqued."*

On the 24th of March, 1870, the painters were called together to vote for the jury of the coming Exposition, and of eighteen jurors Millet was the sixth elected. It was a sort of tardy consecration; the suffrage of the artists raised him to be a judge whose works had been refused, not only in his youthful beginning, but as late as 1859, when he painted "Death and the Wood-cutter." He sent two pictures, "November," a landscape, and "Woman Churning," a favorite theme which he often varied in repeating. The "Knitting-lesson," exhibited earlier in the season, was more favorably noticed, and the "Spinning-woman," of rather uncertain date, is a picture which reminds us in execution of Terburg and some of the masters of his school. It is in place to remark here that during this period of his life Millet, who never sought to pass for a colorist, was much

* [In his life of Rousseau, after giving part of this letter, Sensier quotes Thoré as saying, "Do you know that they are terrible, Millet and Rousseau. They are like rocks; their ideas are immovable. They are there just like two fakirs, and nothing can make them modify one of their opinions." He had been absent twelve years and found himself, as he said, a ghost coming among them again.—TRANS.]

occupied in the harmony of tones, and often tried to strike the brilliant or the intense note of color. The catalogue of the sale at the Hôtel Drouot, after the artist's death, gives 1867-1869 to his "Pig-killers." The motive is not heroic—it is taken without shame from the realities, one may say the cruelties, of peasant life. It is not a picture for a *boudoir*, but it is an energetic and robust painting, in which truth is not veiled. The work has strength from the quality of its tone; if we are not mistaken, Millet found occasion to introduce some very fine reds. It is a color which he never abused. He always preferred dim tints and softened notes of color. He loved delicate harmonies, freshness, and daintiness. In drawing his pastels he had renewed what has been called his flowery manner, and though he was not, like Delacroix, an absolute colorist, a scientific colorist, he often made happy hits in his choice of tones.

BUT questions of art were to be long veiled in the smoke of battle. The enemy approached. Sensier was sent to Tours and then to Bordeaux. Millet left Barbizon, where work, as well as the material support of the family, would have been impossible, and the uniforms of the Uhlans would soon make unpleasant spots in the quiet landscape. It is useless to say that he worked but little. Calmness of spirit was lacking to him, as to us all—the time of eclogues had passed.

"CHERBOURG, 22d September, 1870.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: * * * I am glad you are at Tours and not at Paris. * * * Our hearts and heads are in a vise. * * *

"I can not draw a line out-of-doors. I should immediately be strangled or shot. I was arrested and carried before a military bureau; I was let off by

the reports from the *mairie*, but I was ordered not even to pretend to be holding a pencil. * * *"

"CHERBOURG, 4th October, 1870.

"To M. FEUARDENT.

"DEAR FRIEND: Here we are, encamped in your house in the Rue Hervieu. If the dreadful cause of our presence here could be removed, we would not be so very miserable.

"How the tempest of trouble has scattered us, my poor friend. Let us hold ourselves with a tight rein not to break out into lamentations, for really, one must do oneself violence not to be forever in that condition. And to think that those who have caused all our misery are not even touched, and enjoy life as if nothing had happened. Oh, curses on them!

"I have scarcely done anything since we got here; my poor head is filled with anxiety and sadness. What would really have made me feel like work are the things I can't help seeing when I go out, either the country or the sea; but fancy! I should be instantly seized and, perhaps, torn to pieces if I were seen with even a note-book and pencil. In fact, with my cane only, and no note-book visible, I was questioned six times and more, and in the fiercest way. Every one is in the greatest state of terror; there is more fright than resolution.

"To return to my work: I have three little pictures under way, which I paint from the third story, where the light is favorable, by closing one window. Indeed, our country is a beautiful one, and how happy I shall be to see it under different circumstances! But truly, when I find myself forgetting a little and taking pleasure in seeing things, I am angry at myself and call myself an egotist."

He had left Barbizon expecting soon to return, but he staid more than a year at Cherbourg. The last months of 1870 were full of pain to him, as to all. Many of his letters were lost. All are in a sad and agitated tone.

"9th January, 1871.

"DEAR SENSIER: * * * When shall we ever get out of this horrible state? Ah, how I hate everything German! I am in a constant fever. Curses and ruin be upon them! My strength is nearly exhausted; but with

what I have left I wish for you and yours that you may not be too violently shaken by this shock. Death is making a fine harvest the past and the coming year! * * *"

"CHERBOURG, 27th February, 1871.

"* * * The news of the peace has just arrived. We don't know yet the conditions, which helps us to imagine they are sweet and gentle.

"I don't dare think of the Germans in Paris and all they may do there. When will poor Paris be itself again — for we have still to fear the action of the different parties, when there is nothing to stop them, and when, on the contrary, they try to get into favor by the general misery — oh, greatest rascality of all!

"I have not worked much here, what with my bad health and the trouble in my head — then not to be allowed to make the least sketch for fear of being torn to pieces as a Prussian. I think it can't last, and I may be able to draw a little. What beautiful things to do if I had not my mind so distracted! I will try, at least, that the evils which brought me here shall make me do like children who profit by a fall to pick up something on the ground."

Millet was reaching the age when the infinite seems nearer. He could understand the sea, and we saw at the posthumous sale of his works that he knew, often better than professional marine painters, how to express the serenity of distant perspectives, the depth of limpid skies, and the play of light on luminous water. He had always loved the sea; he early understood its mysterious seduction, and still a child, on the cliffs of Gréville, he studied the riddle of the enchantress. But those great spectacles, where the horizon and wave play together, demand, to be felt, a certain maturity of mind and heart.

"CHERBOURG, 9th April, 1871.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: We are very glad to think you are in Barbizon. What a horrible mess we are in! Where are we drifting to? I will not speak of it, for it seems to me a fierce bedlam let loose in the place of intelligence. My dear Sensier, take as much pleasure as you can in the things of nature;

they are always enduring. I try, for my part, to drive out of my mind (only I can't do it enough) the horrors which I can not remedy, and plunge myself into work. Durand-Ruel has happily sent to me for pictures, but I can not send him many. * * *

"This country is really very interesting, and has many antique aspects. Putting aside some modern things, one might believe oneself in the time of old Breughel. Many villages look like old Flemish tapestry. What velvety greens! What a pity the cows don't know how to paint!"

While he was thinking of Flemish tapestry, Millet little dreamed that an eccentric group of Paris artists had put his name on their flag. He was not very proud of the remembrance of the hot-heads of Paris, and he addressed the following letter to the "Vigie," of Cherbourg, the "Gaulois," and several other journals:

"CHERBOURG, 25th April, 1871.

"TO THE EDITOR: 'La France,' of Sunday, 23d inst., having come to my notice, I find myself named a member of a commission of artists called the *Fédération des Artistes de Paris*.

"I refuse the honor which they have wished to do me.

"Please insert this card in your journal, and accept my thanks and respects. J.-F. MILLET."

"CHERBOURG, May 2d, 1871.

"MY DEAR SENSIER: How wretched is all this business in Paris! Did you see that I had been nominated by the *Fédération des Artistes de Paris?* I replied, 'I do not accept the honor which has been offered me.' What a set of wretches they all are! Courbet, of course, is their president.

"Our time might be called the time of the great slaughter. One can cry out with the prophet, 'O sword of the Lord, wilt thou never rest?' I have no heart to speak of the spring, which comes in spite of all these horrors."

Woman Carrying Milk.

"27th May, 1871.

"Is it not horrible what these wretches have done to Paris? Enormities without precedent. Beside these the Vandals were conservative; they at least ravaged a foreign country! Poor Delacroix, who was so anxious to paint in the public buildings,—what would he say?"

"20th June.

"We went to pass two days at Gréville, where we had not all been. I had been there alone two days in November, and had not returned here. It gives me a great and sad emotion to look like any stranger at the house where I was born and where my parents died. In approaching this poor dwelling, my heart seems to be bursting. How much it brings to my mind! I went over the fields which I once plowed and sowed. Where are those who worked with me? Where are those dear eyes that, with me, gazed over the stretch of the sea?

"The fields belong to strangers, who have the right to ask me my business there and to turn me out. I am full of sorrow and melancholy, and can speak of nothing else; it takes hold of me and oppresses me."

"GRÉVILLE, 12th August.

"How I wish, my dear Sensier, that you could see my native place with me! I fancy this country would please you in many ways, and that you would understand how I become more and more attached to it. Of course, I have reasons that every one has not—the remembrance of my parents and my youth; but I think it might attract a person open to certain impressions. Oh, how I belong to my native soil!"

The 3d of October, 1871, Sensier reached Cherbourg. The two friends immediately began a series of excursions, of which Sensier has sketched an outline. They saw Baumont, Jaubourg, and the Priory of Vauville, of which he made a pen drawing. They went to Gréville, saw the church and cemetery, and a little further on the hamlet of Gruchy and Millet's paternal home, the garden of

his childhood, now in the possession of strangers. Seeing these places, hallowed by tender and painful associations, Millet needed all his self-control to keep from tears. The next day they visited the "Hameau Cousin," which Millet painted for M. Feuardent. They also saw the village of Eculleville, the valley of the Sabine, and, after another visit to the priory of Vauville, they returned to Cherbourg. To Sensier it seemed as if he had been walking in Millet's pictures. On the 7th of November, 1871, Millet returned to Barbizon. He brought back several pictures, finished or half done. We have not the list of them; but Sensier mentions a woman carrying milk in a copper vessel which she holds on her shoulder, of which we give the sketch.*

In a letter of December 12, 1871, Millet tells Sensier that the museum of Lille has acquired one of his pictures — "A Woman Feeding her Children." [See letter to Thoré.] This family scene is one of a series of paintings and drawings which Millet consecrates to children, their charming awkwardness, their delightful greediness, the faltering of their first steps, and their sleep, like the sleep of flowers. Millet had had nine children; the time was soon coming when he would be a grandfather; he never lacked models. He always loved to draw or paint children, from the hour of their birth until they grow tall, and begin to learn to read. To this inspiration we owe many of the drawings so much admired in the collection of M. Gavet: "Evening," "The Sick Child," "Little Goose-girl," "The First Steps." Millet spoke with a tenderness unknown to unmarried men of home, children, and the domestic hearth.

* A milk-carrier of very different design was engraved by Hédouin.

XIII.

Millet's Last Years.

WE have now come to the last years of Millet. He will never leave Barbizon again. His circumstances are improved; he has no longer to wait for orders, and when his pictures appear at sales they bring higher and higher prices. Criticism is disarmed, if not convinced. Millet seems to have reached the goal; but, unhappily, his health is more and more affected. His stern will is no longer an absolute monarch, and often work becomes difficult.

"BARBIZON, 8th January, 1872.

"DEAR SENSIER: We are very much distressed that you should have only illness to console you for sorrow. If, as some Christians believe, God chastens those whom He loves, and gives them a high place above there, you must have a very glorious seat in Paradise.

"M. Durand-Ruel asks for pictures of all sizes. * * *

"An American gentleman and lady, M. and Mme. Shaw, of Boston, came, lately, to ask me for a picture. I must paint them one. They chose among my drawings 'The Priory of Vauville.'

"Detrimont and his wife came to get the little shepherd. He wants another picture."

"25th April, 1872.

"To M. Alfred Bruyas — Sir: Believe me honored and flattered by the request of your letter of the 8th of April. I only regret that I can not immediately comply with your request, as I have had so many demands since my return. But you may depend upon me to remember the object of your wish, and to give it my attention as soon as I possibly can. * * *

"What you say of the works of Barye does not surprise me; it is just what I think of him. He is one of the artists best fitted for the accomplishment of great things. * * *"

"Barbizon, 6th August, 1872.

"Dear Sensier: I have not yet finished my 'Church of Gréville.' I have done little. I have groaned more than I have worked, for I have made little more than a sketch. You know the subject: a cow-herd blowing a horn to call his cows together; end of day (sunset effect). I am working on my 'Woman sewing by Lamp-light.'

"Barye is here. I have not yet seen him. I will go to see him, as he is not out yet, though he is better."

In 1872 and 1873, Millet finished the pictures begun at Cherbourg, and worked on others. Besides the landscapes for M. Hartmann and the young mother with the baby in her arms (life size), he painted the "Priory of Vauville," and several other pictures. Unfortunately, a nervous distress and the frequent recurrence of painful headaches lessened greatly his hours of work. Several remained unfinished, and those he completed he kept by him, thinking to take them up again and work on them, for, as he often said, he believed with Rousseau that a picture was never finished. The "Church of Gréville," now in the Luxembourg, was in his studio at his death.*

* The state bought "The Bathers." At the Luxembourg may also be seen four of his drawings, "Shepherdess Knitting," "Shepherdess Seated," "Sewing-women," and "A Church near Cusset."

"31st December, 1872.

"My eyes are very painful. * * * I work very little, which distresses me. My 'Priory' is in the same state as when you saw it. I will have the measures taken for the cross on Rousseau's tomb.

"Here goes the year 1872 where all the years have gone! We all embrace you, you and Marguerite, and wish you all we can wish to those we love the best."

In 1873, M. Camille Lemonnier, a critic at Brussels, sent to Millet a pamphlet called: "The Paris *Salon*, 1870." Millet, in a reply, thanking him for it, took the opportunity to express briefly the thought which it seemed to him should be dominant in all art creations.

"Barbizon, 15th Feb., 1873.

"Dear Sir: I am very much flattered by your letter, and thank you for making me acquainted with your work as art critic. The most enviable reward of those who try to do their best is to excite the sympathy of intelligent men. This is equivalent to saying that I am happy to have been the occasion of your expressing certain truths of art. Only, you say of me things which I consider to be so desirable that I dare not believe myself possessed of them. It is not that I would doubt your judgment, but I distrust myself.

"But let me put myself aside quickly, that I may say (without stumbling over my own toes) that I must give you great praise for considering things from their fundamental side. It is the only true, solid side. Many people, far from taking this point of view, seem to think that art is only a sort of show of professional ability. *You* understand that the artist must have a high and definite aim. Without it, how can he make efforts to reach a point of which he does not even suspect the existence? How can a dog pursue game which he can not scent? It depends, therefore, upon his aim, and the way in which he reaches it, that an artist is of interest.

"I assure you, sir, that if it only were a question of my own will I would express strongly the type which is, in my opinion, the greatest truth. You are quite right to think that such is my intention. But I find myself started on a

very difficult road, and I do not want to go any farther [in writing]. If you ever come to Paris and get as far as Barbizon, we could talk about it.
* * * J.-F. MILLET."

We see him always looking for the type, the accentuation of the physiognomy; at that time, at least, this was his principal aim. In truth, he had always thought of it, and in his search it had happened to him as to the early masters and sincere painters of the sixteenth century—in pursuing character he had on the road met ugliness. I mean that, hostile on principle to commonplace idealizations, he was not afraid to put into his rustic compositions figures of rough aspect and coarse individuality, with expressions which seemed to admit that the human is not always vastly superior to the animal. It is this scarcely veiled tendency which so often excited the heat of Théophile Gautier and Paul de Saint-Victor, and which even Thoré mentioned in the "Peasants Bringing Home a Calf." In the "Man with the Hoe," the head of the terrible worker of the ground has something disturbing in it. "The little Barbizon Beggar" is not much beautified, and the "Vine-dresser Resting" is not altogether charming. "What more terrible than the 'Vine-dresser Resting,'" writes M. Burty, "seated, sweating, the arms hanging and legs apart! His hands, which have grown knotted like the stock of the vine, his feet dusty, his mouth open, his brow incapable of a thought beyond the vine which has taxed his strength." Millet was convinced that expression redeems everything.

At a sale on the 7th of April, 1873, Millet had the pleasure of seeing his "Woman with a Lamp" sell for 38,000 francs. His "Washerwoman" reached the price of 15,350, and later, "Geese,"

The First Steps.

25,000, and the "Woman Churning," engraved by M. Martial, 14,000. If Millet had been vain, these sums might have consoled him for his past misfortunes.*

"BARBIZON, 22d Sept., 1873.

"DEAR SENSIER: Since I saw you I have suffered greatly. My cough kills me. Only these last few days am I a little better. I am breaking down completely, I assure you."

Unfortunately, the breaking-down of which he speaks is a real thing. In the spring and summer he had been more or less ill. One June night, after an accident, which his letters do not explain, he was seized with a dreadful hemorrhage, which greatly weakened him. An unfortunate cough deprived him for weeks of all vigor or energy. He worked, nevertheless, and finished several pictures. At the sale of his studio effects, some of the unfinished pictures of this time were seen; especially two unfinished shepherdesses were to be regretted. In one, the tower of the mill of Chailly showed on the horizon; in the other, I think more advanced, the shepherdess was bringing back her flock. The sun is already set; the girl walks, followed by her sheep, which a dog, mounted on a hillock, watches as they hurry past. The landscape is wrapped in vapor. Millet always understood the melancholy of evening and the silent hour when the first stars come out.

Millet's correspondence stops abruptly in the spring of 1874. Writing, formerly so easy to the brave artist, has become a fatigue.

"BARBIZON, 18th March, 1874.

"How long it is since I have written to you, my dear Sensier! I am in such a weak state of health that I put off from day to day what I have to do. Believe me, I think of you all the same. If my body is weakened, my heart is not colder. * * *"

* [During Millet's life-time, "The Angelus" was resold for 50,000 francs.—TRANS.]

The Republic wished to repair the long forgetfulness of the past. The administration of the Beaux Arts, then headed by a writer to whom the honor of French art was always precious, conceived the idea of decorating the cold walls of the Pantheon, or of Sainte Geneviève—for it seems the Pantheon is a church without looking like it. M. de Chennevières, to his honor be it said, did not forget Millet. The 12th of May, 1874, the Minister signed an order allowing him 50,000 francs for the execution of decorative paintings in the chapel of Sainte Geneviève.

The order came very late. Millet was to paint the "Miracle des Ardents" and the procession of the shrine of Sainte Geneviève—in all eight subjects, four big and four little. He immediately began to make out in charcoal the plan of his compositions. He was both appalled and delighted at such an attractive task, but death did not permit him to carry it out.

Sensier and M. Hartmann went to see Millet on the 9th of July, 1874. He was finishing the "Priory" for Mr. Shaw, and "The Spring," for M. Hartmann, was finished. He was working on two others, "Hay-cocks" and "Buckwheat-Thrashers."

"We saw in the studio," writes Sensier, "another subject almost done, and promising to be very fine,—a reminiscence of Millet's home: a sea-view, framed by the posts of a gate-way, opening on land going down to the shore. Some cows feeding in the inclosure, whose heads only were visible, permitted the artist to express the steep movement of the soil. The strength of color was extraordinary." The visitors must have also seen his "Ass on a Moor,"—on the incline of a rocky piece of ground an ass braying; above

the landscape a great spring sky, in which the luminous clouds, driven by the wind, whirl up in spirals. This strange and brilliant picture was much admired.

Sensier staid a week. Millet was very melancholy.

"One day in August, the day after Nôtre-Dame, Millet felt a little better. All the children and grandchildren were assembled. We decided to go all together for a long drive in the forest. We went off full of gayety, the young people in front in an open wagon; Millet, his wife, and I, in a little *calèche*, brought up the rear. The day was pure and clear. Millet was open and talkative, and seemed happy to see his numerous offspring around him. He had words of kindness and affection for me.

"'Friends,' he said, 'get tired or leave us, in the hard moments of life. Some die or disappear. You have remained. You have always helped, sustained, encouraged, and understood me.'

"The drive was long. We saw again Bellecroix, the valley of the Solle, Mount Chauvet, the Calvary, the old forest trees, the rocks of St. Germain,—all the marvels of this forest of inexhaustible enchantment. And Millet kept ever returning to the memory of past times, the splendors of this living nature, which had decided him to cut loose from old mythology. I shall never forget this day. I saw him several times again, but never in such bright spirits. He suffered all the time, and knew that the great day of rest was approaching."

The autumn was sad. In November, Millet was already very weak, but he still worked. He finished his "Priory," which he sent to America. He thought over his decorations for Sainte Geneviève, and improved them. He sketched the "Sewing-Lesson,"—a quiet rustic scene, in which, as usual, he throws over daily labor a poetic charm, and in which an open window shows a garden full of greenery.

In the month of December, the fever became more frequent, with intervals of delirium, followed by long prostration. Here and

there he had days of calm, in which he was conscious of his state. He made his last requests, talked a great deal to his children, begged his family to keep together, and said, with a touching melancholy, that his life was closing too soon—that he died just as he began to see clearly into nature and art.

Sometimes he regained a little serenity, and believed—or pretended to believe—in a possible recovery. He asked to have "Redgauntlet," which he had once liked, re-read to him. But Millet could not again feel the pleasure that the book had inspired in his youth.

At the end of December he went to bed, and did not rise again.

Sensier gives us, in a note, a pathetic detail. In the first days of January, 1875, when the doctors no longer hid their anxiety about him, Millet had gone to sleep between two attacks of fever. He was suddenly awakened by the noise of guns and the baying of a pack of hounds. A stag, driven by the hunters and filled with frenzied terror, had jumped the fences, and taken refuge in a neighbor's garden. The wretched animal was cruelly butchered. Millet, who had never liked huntsmen, was struck by the tragedy. "It is an omen," said he.

He was right; he had but a few days to live. The great painter breathed his last on the 20th of January, 1875, at six in the morning.

Everywhere his death created a feeling of profound regret. A volume could be made of the newspaper articles written about him. His friends, who had long understood him, expressed eloquently their sorrow. Those even who had been indifferent were touched;

28 Shepherdess with Sheep.

they discovered that the French school had sustained an irreparable loss. The time of old recriminations was past, and irony was silenced. On the 6th of April, an exhibition was opened for the benefit of the Millet family. In June the collection was sold, and in the interval the contents of the artist's studio were sold at the Hôtel Drouot. They consisted principally of sketches in pastels, water-colors, and crayon. People then saw how wide a field the master covered, what variety there was in his manner, the intensity of his conviction, and the strength and gracefulness of his handling.

Millet was worthily praised. Those who remember good criticism have not forgotten the two articles by M. Philippe Burty in the "République Française," nor the excellent notice by M. Charles Yriarte in "L'Art." Belgium, where Millet had many friends, and where, thanks to M. Arthur Stevens, his works were to be found in famous collections at a time when the French amateurs were still indifferent,—Belgium also brought her praises to the painter of Barbizon. And even America sent her testimony of esteem and regret. The article by Mr. Edward Wheelwright, in the "Atlantic Monthly" of September, 1876, is one of the most complete and personal studies that have been published of Millet.

Such an enumeration must perforce be incomplete. But we can not pass over some phrases, sympathetic in spite of their reserve, which Fromentin has written about Millet:

"An original painter of our own time, a lofty soul, a melancholy spirit, a good heart, a nature truly rustic, has said of the country and country people, of the severity, the melancholy, and the nobility of their work, things which no Dutchman would have ever dreamed of looking for. He said them in a

language a little rude, and under forms where the thought has more clearness and vigor than the hand. We were deeply thankful for his tendencies; and in the French school of painting we saw in him the sensibilities of a Burns, less clever than the poet in making himself understood. After all, has he or not left beautiful pictures? Has his form, his language—I mean that exterior envelope without which the things of the mind can not exist or last—has it the qualities to make him a beautiful painter, and to assure his future fame? He is a profound thinker compared with Paul Potter and de Cuyp; he is a sympathetic dreamer compared with Terburg and Metsu; he has something incontestably noble when we think of the trivialities of Steen, Ostade, and Brauwer. As a man, he puts them all to the blush; as a painter, is he their equal?"

Our friend Fromentin, who pushed his penetration to the verge of uneasiness, has asked an indiscreet question. The difficulty of judging definitively of the talent of a contemporary master was seen by a writer who sometimes compromises himself so far as to express our own thought. The "Temps" of 2d March, 1875, contains some lines where the author has tried to explain why Millet was dear to us. This quotation may serve as a conclusion to the present volume:

"There is in every work of art a sort of perfume which evaporates with time. A new breath passes over the mind, generations coming up, seeking a new ideal, are often uncertain and troubled before some picture or drawing, which, at the moment that the artist finished it, aroused in the soul of his contemporaries a whole world of sentiment and ideas. Something like this may perhaps happen to Millet. In the future it may create surprise that his cause was defended with such extreme heat, at a time when his advance met with resistance. Did this rustic really occupy in modern art the great place which our esteem has made for him? Why not? Let it be remembered to what meager diet we were then condemned—how few consolatory spectacles had been offered to us. During the historic period ending in 1870, we saw the painful work of artists who, under pretext of style, moved about in an artificial

world, which amounted to nothing but supreme stupidity. Life was not in it. So, when, after his first gropings, we found in Millet healthy simplicity and frankness, a certain grandeur reflected upon types which were not invented,—an almost unconscious remembrance of the methods dear to the old masters,—we praised his effort and went out to welcome this new poetry. The future will decide whether we have made a mistake or not. It seems to us that Millet brought into the school a new element, a manner which by condensing form generalizes and aggrandizes it.

"It would be a mistake to reproach him with having suppressed details and taken away accidentals; he was seeking the essential, and he found it. Millet had his ideal, and even if he did not always succeed in reaching it, it will always be to his honor that he strove with indomitable energy to be faithful to truth while escaping the littleness of prose."

Barbizon 22 Décembre 1867

Très-cher ami

Notre pauvre Rousseau est mort ce matin à 9 heures. Nous nous attendions bien d'après le médecin que ce moment-là ne pouvait être bien éloigné, nous n'en sommes pas moins consternés & abimés. Son enterrement est fixé à mardi prochain, ~~la levée~~ le corps se fera à 1 heure très-précise Si vous pouvez venir venez.

Nous vous embrassons tous

J.F. Millet

APPENDIX.

SENSIER had often begged Millet to write down the thoughts which came to him on questions of art. Millet was not a writer, and thought that his art work ought to present a clear enough expression of his thoughts and his dreams. Once or twice, however, he consented to take pen in hand. This "note," which we found among his friend's papers, will be read with interest:

"When Poussin sent to M. de Chantelou his picture of the 'Manna,' he did not say, 'Look, what fine *pâte!* Isn't it swell? Isn't it tip-top?' or any of this kind of thing which so many painters seem to consider of such value, though I can not see why they should. He says: 'If you remember the first letter which I wrote to you about the movement of the figures which I promised you to put in, and if you look at the whole picture, I think you will easily understand which are those who languish, which are filled with admiration, those who pity, those who act from charity, from great necessity, from desire, from the wish to satiate themselves, and others — for the first seven figures on the left hand will tell you all that is written above, and all the rest is of the same kind.'

"Very few painters are sufficiently careful as to the effect of a picture seen at a distance great enough to see all at once, and as a whole. Even if a picture comes together as it should, you hear people say, 'Yes, but when you come near it is not finished!' Then of another, which does not look like anything at the distance from which it should be seen: 'But look at it near by; see how it is finished!' Nothing counts except the fundamental. If a tailor tries on a coat, he stands off at a distance great enough to see the fit. If he likes the general look, it is time enough then to examine the details; but if he should be satisfied with making fine button-holes and other accessories, even if they were *chefs-d'œuvres*, on a badly cut coat, he will none the less have made a bad job. Is not this true of a piece of architecture, or of anything else? It is the manner of conception of a work which should strike us first, and nothing ought to go outside of that. It is an atmosphere beyond which nothing can exist. There should be a *milieu* of one kind or another, but that which is adopted should rule.

"As confirmation to the proposition that details are only the complement of the fundamental construction, Poussin says: 'Being fluted (pilasters) and rich in themselves, we

should be careful not to spoil their beauty by the confusion of ornament, for such accessories and incidental subordinate parts are not adapted to works whose principal features are already beautiful, unless with great prudence and good judgment, in order that this may give grace and elegance, for ornaments were only invented to modify a certain severity which constitutes pure architecture.'

"We should accustom ourselves to receive from Nature all our impressions, whatever they may be and whatever temperament we may have. We should be saturated and impregnated with her, and think what she wishes to make us think. Truly, she is rich enough to supply us all. And whence should we draw, if not from the fountain-head? Why forever urge, as a supreme aim to be reached, that which the great minds have already discovered in her, because they have mined her with constancy and labor, as Palissy says? But, nevertheless, they have no right to set up for mankind one example forever. By that means the productions of one man would become the type and the aim of all the productions of the future.

"Men of genius are gifted with a sort of divining-rod; some discover in Nature this, others that, according to their kind of scent. Their productions assure you that he who finds is formed to find; but it is funny to see how, when the treasure is unearthed, people come for ages to scratch at that one hole. The point is to know where to find truffles. A dog who has not scent will be but a poor hunter if he can only run at sight of another who scents the game, and who, of course, must always be the first. And if we only hunt through imitativeness, we can not run with much spirit, for it is impossible to be enthusiastic about nothing. Finally, men of genius have the mission to show, out of the riches of Nature, only that which they are permitted to take away, and to show them to those who would not have suspected their presence nor ever found them, as they have not the necessary faculties. They serve as translators and interpreters to those who can not understand her language. They can say, like Palissy: 'You see these things in my cabinet.' They, too, may say: 'If you give yourself up to Nature, as we have done, she will let you take away of these treasures according to your powers. You only need intelligence and good-will.'

"It must be an enormous vanity or an enormous folly that makes certain men believe that they can rectify the pretended lack of taste or the errors of Nature. On what authority do they lean? With them who do not love her and who do not trust her, she does not let herself be understood, and retires into her shell. She must be constrained and reserved with them. And, of course, they say: 'The grapes are green. Since we can not reach them, let us speak ill of them.' We might here apply the words of the prophet: God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

"Nature gives herself to those who take the trouble to court her, but she wishes to be loved exclusively. We love certain works only because they proceed from her. Every other work is pedantic and empty.

"We can start from any point and arrive at the sublime, and all is proper to be expressed, provided our aim is high enough. Then what you love with the greatest passion and power becomes a beauty of your own, which imposes itself upon others. Let each bring

his own. An impression demands expression, and especially requires that which is capable of showing it most clearly and strongly. The whole arsenal of Nature has ever been at the command of strong men, and their genius has made them take, not the things which are conventionally called the most beautiful, but those which suited best their places. In its own time and place, has not everything its part to play? Who shall dare to say that a potato is inferior to a pomegranate?

"Decadence set in when people began to believe that art, which she (Nature) had made, was the supreme end; when such and such an artist was taken as model and aim without remembering that he had his eyes fixed on infinity.

"They still spoke of Nature, but meant thereby only the life-model which they used, but from whom they got nothing but conventionalities. If, for instance, they had to paint a figure out-of-doors, they still copied, for the purpose, a model lighted by a studio light, without appearing to dream that it had no relation to the luminous diffusion of light out-of-doors — a proof that they were not moved by a very deep emotion, which would have prevented artists from being satisfied with so little. For, as the spiritual can only be expressed by the observation of objects in their truest aspect, this physical untruth annihilated all others. There is no isolated truth.

"The moment that a man could do something masterly in painting, it was called good. If he had great anatomical knowledge, he made that pre-eminent, and was greatly praised for it, without thinking that these fine acquirements ought to serve, as indeed all others should, to express the thoughts of the mind. Then, instead of thoughts, he would have a programme. A subject would be sought which would give him a chance to exhibit certain things which came easiest to his hand. Finally, instead of making one's knowledge the humble servant of one's thought, on the contrary, the thought was suffocated under the display of a noisy cleverness. Each eyed his neighbor, and was full of enthusiasm for a manner.

"My small experience in writing * * * makes me omit a great many things, which causes obscurities. Try, therefore, to guess what I intended to say without taking literally what I have said. What I began to say was not sufficiently thought out before saying it; and I have not written enough. But I will try to come back to it, and do it with less haste."

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